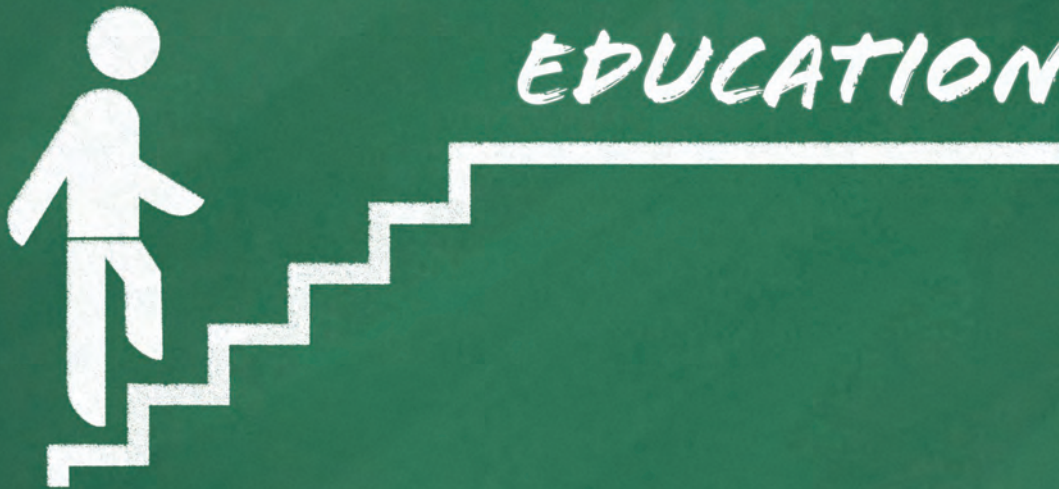


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Issue 2, 2019

Evangelical Perspectives on Mission and Ethics

TRANSFORMATIONAL EDUCATION



"The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out."

Proverbs 18:15 New International Version (NIV)

Drishtikone means perspective or viewpoint in Hindi. The magazine seeks to provide a space in which Christians can share their perspectives and points of view on wholistic mission in India.

Our Vision is that **Drishtikone** will motivate change in readers. The experiences of development practitioners, theologians, grassroots workers and others demonstrating God's love in a practical way, will influence and encourage Christians to join the struggle for peace and justice in this country.

Drishtikone seeks to present a Biblical perspective on social issues and provide readers with information and models of engagement in wholistic concerns. It is a forum for evangelical reflection and dialogue on development issues in India.

Drishtikone is published three times a year by EFICOR to mobilise Christian reflection and action. Financial contributions from readers are welcome to support EFICOR in its efforts to influence the mind towards action.

Publications Committee

C.B. Samuel, Kennedy Dhanabalan, Bonnie Miriam Jacob, Lalbiakhlui (Kuki) Rokhum, Joan Lalromawi, Raaj Mondol, Anugrah Abraham, Green Thomas, Senganglu Thaimai, Naveen Siromoni, Shobana Vetrivel, Prem Livingstone.

Editor - Rev. Kennedy Dhanabalan

Please forward any enquiries to:

Editorial Team,
308, Mahatta Tower,
B - 54, Community Centre,
Janakpuri, New Delhi - 110058, INDIA
Tele / Fax: +91-11-25516383/4/5
E-mail: hq@eficor.org
Web: www.eficor.org

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Letter to the Editor...



Dear Editor,

Greetings to you all!

Thank you so much for sending Drishtikone magazine on 'Accessing Health Care in India' - Issue 1, 2019. The issues highlighted, the policies and schemes mentioned on Health Care in India will certainly bring awareness and sensitivity among communities in India, as the articles are very informative and helpful.

Best wishes!

Praying for you all.

*Subhash Samuel,
Bethel Church Association,
Katihar,
Bihar.*

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Editorial...

In the last ten years, while India has made gains in literacy, student enrolment and student retention, the education of our youth continues to be plagued by serious systemic issues. Education has come to be associated with memorising facts, passing exams and achieving a degree, with little attention and care given to the depth of understanding, the underlying ideals and values, or whether there has been critical engagement with the concepts that have been taught. The contributors to this issue of Drishtikone discuss the problems encountered as a result of this focus, one of which being that unfortunately our educational institutions are often perpetuating the biases that are already inherent in society.

There is no doubt that we need transformation in our education system. Teaching is more than the transmission of information and learning is more than the retention of facts. The contributors to this issue all, in their own way, suggest the importance of returning to the core question and asking what does it mean to receive an education? What should be the goals we aim for when we educate our citizens, from primary aged children all the way through to university students?

This issue of Drishtikone highlights the many ways in which our education system could be transformed. Education has true value when it teaches concepts that learners can apply to their real life situations, when it expands one's consciousness, when it challenges the learner to think critically about their assumptions, beliefs and world view, as well as the assumptions of others. The focus in this issue of Drishtikone is to also highlight the contribution that the Christian church can play in bringing transformation to education. Christians have been involved in the field of education for many years and historically have played a crucial role in this transformative process. The challenge of the church is to encourage both students and teachers to consider and engage with values, ethics and worldview. Only when we do this, do we have the opportunity to build a society that challenges biases, uplifts the poor, and instils Kingdom values in the world around us. It's a large task, and an extremely important one.

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Education For Transformation: A Way Forward

Fr. Tom Kunnankal

Our Current Emerging Context

We are in a new world, moving to a newer world. Steven Kotler, in his book titled “Superhuman Performances” says that in the last few decades (not centuries) science and its executive engineer - technology, have produced more innovations, appliances and applications for our convenience than in the past 150,000 years. We live in the most wonder-filled period of our human history. However, the sad reality is that majority of the people in the world do not even have the basic minimum needed for a decent human life. Many experience tremendous hardship and pain, poverty, illness, violence, shame and stigma. Artificial intelligence, robotics and newer forms of technology, while providing many benefits, are also causing many to lose their jobs and livelihood.

Many of the youth today are exposed to stress from various sources and experience great confusion about life and its meaning. Some choose to end

their life through suicide due to feelings of frustration and meaninglessness in life. For many people, religion has ceased to deliver answers. In the context of such a storm of change, what is our approach as responsible educationists? Do we need to alter the way in which we assess our schools and our education system?

Responding to Life Contexts through Education

The education system has two parts. The first part of education deals with the acquisition of knowledge, and for many, is achieving very good results. This is the necessary first part. But the more important second part is to assess

how well we have prepared students to meet life’s many future challenges. Learning goes beyond the transmission of facts and skills. It is this part that makes education a spiritual process. If no transformation has happened, no worthwhile education has taken place.

Unfortunately, we have largely transferred the 19th century industrial or machine age model into our school system. That model was good for production of things, but not for human development. We have adopted the same four guidelines that controlled production of things and applied them as our management model for human development: **boss, rules, control and efficiency**. This is evident in the transmission pedagogy we have employed in our classrooms.

“Learning goes beyond the transmission of facts and skills. It is this part that makes education a spiritual process. If no transformation has happened, no worthwhile education has taken place.”

From Boss to Leader

We need a director, yes, but not a boss. One can readily notice a sharp difference between a Manager Principal and a Leader Principal.

Most school Principals are devoted to administration and supervision and do not exercise their primary responsibility as leaders. A leader multiplies, while a manager merely adds. Consequently, more than a crisis of resources, there is a crisis of leadership in the various sectors of the wider society. What, then, characterizes a transformative educationist? The transformative educationist will ensure that he/she will bring out personal worth and potential of the learners so clearly that they begin to see it in themselves and respond enthusiastically. The transformative educationist is like an architect who creates and designs a vision and a mission and then becomes a steward, achieving this through collaborative actions. To bring about transformation, the school must

become the fulcrum and principal and teachers become the levers to bring about this transformation. Archimedes was excited when he discovered the power of lever and fulcrum and said: "Give me a pole long enough and I can move the world". The mission of education is to move the world, to build a new and better world and a new people. When educationists see education as their mission and see themselves as part of God's mission then they will be part of bringing transformational change. If they assume the role of leadership, the output would be very significant as their institutions will develop many who will become architects and builders of future India. Transformative education is therefore an enabling act. This is the essential task of the educationist.

“ William Glasser says that we learn 10% of what we read; 20% of what we hear; 30% of what we see; 50% of what we both see and hear; 70% of what is discussed with others; 80% of what we experience; 95% of what we teach. ”

hear; 70% of what is discussed with others; 80% of what we experience; 95% of what we teach. It is plain to see why the majority of students in our macro education system fail in life. They mostly can learn only by hearing and are not given opportunities to learn by doing or learn by seeing. Excessive control disempowers students and results in a loss of passion and energy. This model has insisted not only on

how students learn, it also decided what was to be taught. A shift has to occur from yesterday's paradigm when the teacher alone taught, to the new paradigm where learning becomes an act of community, engaging the

students through interactive and small group learning. Learning space has become ubiquitous. Technology offers an immense amount of good e-learning resources today and most of them are free. A committed and competent teacher, with the support of technology, can enable all, or almost all, students not only to pass but to pass well, including in subjects like Maths and Science. God has no *aam admi* (mediocre). All are precious to Him. Everyone can be made a winner. The challenge of education is precisely to make this happen.

Creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving have been identified as the four 21st century learning skills for all. How well does our education nurture these? Mere IQ based left brain knowledge competence will not carry one far into life in the current contexts but we need to develop also right brain skills. In his book titled "A whole new mind" and the sub title: "Why right brainers will rule the future", the Harvard professor, Dr. Daniel Pink mentions research on how much the left brain or IQ will continue to contribute to success in life. 30, 40 or more percent? The surprising research finding: 10 percent or less. The issue is not whether left brain contribution still has relevance. The issue is that without a good mix, yes a very good mix, of left and right brain competencies, you will not continue to win in life. Our schools don't have a curriculum for right brain development.

From efficiency to effectiveness

What criteria do we set for excellence of our educational institutions? Can we discard the criteria of how many of our students have become ministers and hold high offices in

4 From Rules and Control to Developing Creativity, Freedom and Responsibility

Do we need rules? Surely, but not so many mindless rules. Do we need control? Yes, but we need to shift away from coercive discipline and towards helping students develop self-control and self-discipline. There is a culture of control in many schools. Schools have taken on the structure of an assembly line. This was perhaps a comforting model for administrators and teachers but a very painful one for students as they had little freedom to learn. As in the industrial age, conformity has been insisted upon as a core value. When schools develop a culture of control, many will experience pain. The cause for the pain comes from not being given the free space and time to pursue meaningful goals and purposes, to experiment, to experience the joy of discovering, even when there are mistakes committed.

Furthermore, this education model that relies heavily on rules and teacher control has made educators into controllers and inspectors, thereby transforming the traditional mentor-mentee relationship and establishing teacher-centred rather than student-centred learning. This model has insisted not only on how students learn, it also decided what was to be taught. It established uniformity of product and process as norms, thereby naively assuming that all children learn in the same way. William Glasser says that we learn 10% of what we read; 20% of what we hear; 30% of what we see; 50% of what we both see and

the country? Instead, we should be asking whether at least 5-10% of our graduating students, in their adult years and while engaged in their professions, are contributing to create a new India envisaged by the Constitution. Are they actively engaging in actions and programmes that are making a difference to people's life and conditions? Efficiency we surely need, but along with it and more importantly, we need effectiveness, namely a focus on norms, principles, values and climate.

Today it has become a common practice to put a price on everything. There is an opportunity for our schools to create a counter-culture to the prevailing culture where money has become almost the sole currency for all transactions. Oscar Wilde said in 1880, "We know the price of everything and the value of nothing." We have put a money price on life, on death, and on everything between. But there are so many priceless things in life. How can we help the young to demonetize their life and bring some of the priceless into their life? For that to happen, we need to bring about a shift of focus in us, educators and learners, from present beliefs, attitudes, behaviour patterns, habits and lifestyle to new ways of living. We need to believe in the inherent goodness of the learners; believe that they can also become giving persons, generous, loving, sharing, etc. Give the young new opportunities and they will perform in new and more meaningful ways rather than being stuck in the rut of routines we have created. It is a great challenge to shape the future state of our educational institutions.

Culture has great transformative power. An institution's excellence is very much linked to the culture it creates. To mention some examples:

- a) Culture of collaboration creating synergy and the miracle of $1+1 = 3$ or 4
- b) Culture of freedom to learn, to experiment, to allow mistakes to be made and learn from them
- c) Culture of self discipline than imposed discipline
- d) Culture of high standards and a good work ethic
- e) Culture of the whole school becoming a community of learners
- f) Culture of mutual trust and easy sharing.

When our schools focus on culture, values, and ethics, and encourage students to engage meaningfully in their education, we are more likely to prepare them for an unpredictable tomorrow and bring about transformation.

On a positive note, education has expanded its goals and purposes over the past few decades in India - moving from mere focus on personal growth and development to include also societal transformation. The National Education Committee report of 1966 is titled Education and National Development. The National Education Commission Report on Teachers (1983) and National Review Committee Report

of the National Policy on Education of 1986 ("Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society") identified the following National Goals: a) A United and Secular India; b) A Modern Nation; c) A Productive People; d) A Humane and Caring Society; and e) Enlightened and Proactive Citizens. In its Report (1996) titled: "Learning: The Treasure Within", proposing a paradigm of education to meet the unforeseen demands of the new millennium, the UNESCO report mentions four pillars of education for life and living: Learning to Do or becoming competent, in a world where being competent has become a non-negotiable requirement; Learning to Learn or remaining a lifelong learner, in a knowledge-intensive world; Learning to live with others or learning to relate, in a greatly divided and conflictual world and Learning to Be or be a person of character and principles.

It is such a great tragedy that so many institutions still follow this outdated transmission model. In place of the transmission pedagogy of the 19th century, we need the transformative pedagogy of the 21st century. Is this transformation possible? The world famous anthropologist, Margaret Mead, says Yes: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has". So, that is your challenge! That is your Mission.



(Fr. Tom Kunnunkal, a Jesuit priest, was Principal of St. Xavier's School, Delhi for 14 years; was Chairman of CBSE for 8 years and was the founder Chairman of the National Institute of Open Schooling for 3 years. He wrote a book titled 'A New Way of being School.' He can be reached at kunnunkal.tom@gmail.com)

Engaging with Education in a New Technological Age

Dr. Joy L.K. Pachuau

I respond to the essay by Father Kunnankal not as one who has had the experience of teaching at the school level, but as one who has taught those thus educated at a post-graduate university. From over twenty years of teaching at a post-graduate university, I can see the challenges that educationists in our country are facing, and the need of the times is to recognise and change the premises of our education in order to meet the challenges. Modern education that is based on the premise of universal literacy and numeracy had its roots in the Reformation beginning in the 16th century in Europe. The need of the hour at that time was to have a personal access to scripture in order not to be exploited. Thus began the push towards literacy for all. Education thus had a much more limited role then. Much of what we understand by education seems to stem from such an underlying premise. While many in our country do not experience the empowering benefits of literacy, the technological changes of the late 20th and 21st century that Father Kunnankal has pointed out as well as even more radical ones that will make their appearance in the future, require that education provides not just literacy or knowledge but also the means to handle the changes the world is going through. Technology comes with a culture, and education needs to facilitate the means to engage with that culture as well.

At Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), we come across students from diverse backgrounds, some from the most elite of upbringings but others from the remotest and poorest areas in the country. This has been the heritage of JNU, and one has heard many success stories of how the University became a place of transformation for them. I don't think I am wrong when I say that for some time now such transformations are proving to be even more difficult. This I believe is because of the continued poor levels of primary education in the country on the one hand and, on the other, the rapid changes that are taking place in the field of knowledge and technology. The gap created becomes very difficult for students from weaker educational backgrounds to surmount. It is safe to assume that this is the challenge



not only in the field of academics but in other fields of life as well. Quality education especially at the school level is thus needed more than ever. Father Kunnankal's essay highlights very clearly what this quality education should look like and the role of the educationist therein. My response is directed mainly towards the context in which this need arises.

Let me again take the example of higher learning. Academia requires certain skills, the most important of those being analytical skills. Secondly, in India, we cannot take for granted that most people who pursue higher education have a good command over the English language; therefore, the next important skill in order to pursue higher learning is the mastery of the language. The ability to understand, critique and communicate one's understanding in English is still very necessary given the lack of any other substitute language and given that most necessary works are still available only in

English. Beyond this of course is the ethics of research. What one finds lacking increasingly in many of our students is the moral integrity to pursue research. Having integrity requires being true to one's self – and this self includes the moral self, the ethical self as well as the political self. Just as important is the need and capacity to be true to the idea one is trying to understand. As I mentioned earlier analytical skills are extremely important; however and fortunately, they can be learnt along the way, but the moral/ethical/ideological scape through which one is using the analytical yard is what seems to be particularly missing in today's education. Years of teaching in JNU have made me see the decline of standards in all these areas with many coming into the system just to go through the system (and earn a degree) without much appreciation for what higher learning involves. The inability to equip students in these areas at the school level has also unfortunately meant that our institutes of higher learning become places where these basic skills are taught (if one is fortunate) and not the pursuit of higher learning as such. What should have been skills that researchers came with are increasingly skills learnt at higher levels. One can only wonder the standard of research that this produces.

The skills mentioned above are not the prerequisites for academics alone. They are, I believe, the requirements for all occupations and walks of life. The education we receive in schools needs to address all these issues. In a world where communication is in shorthand, where attention spans are declining, where technology is the moral arbitrator, being

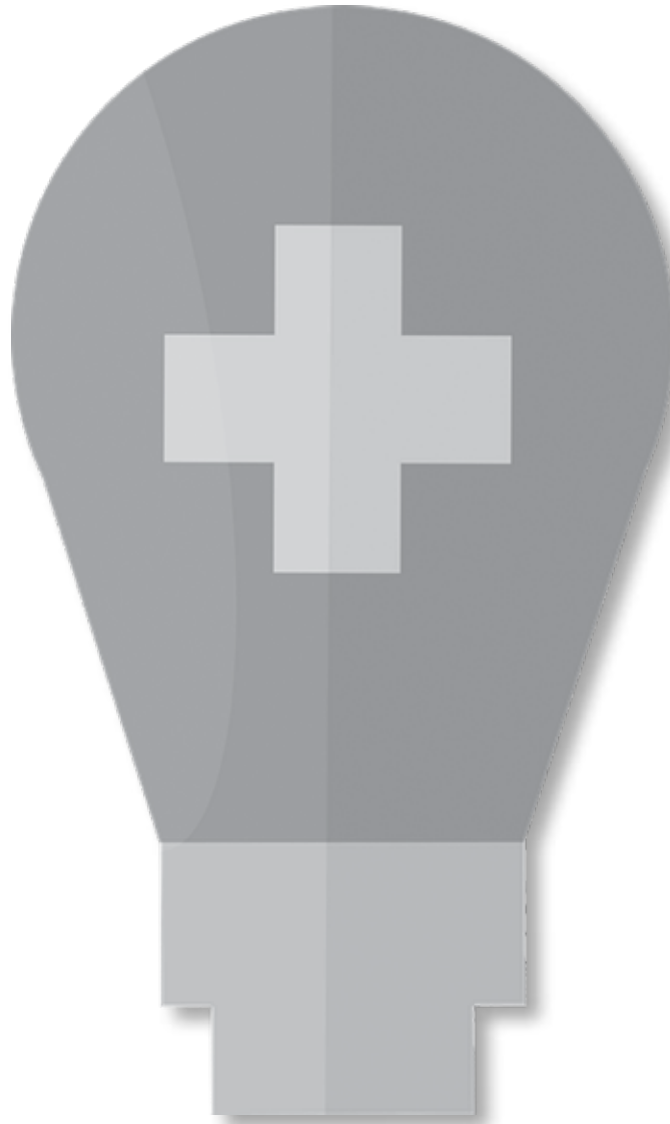


Photo: www.pixabay.com

“Educationists need to take seriously the call that education isn't for education's sake alone but to create 'human beings', in the full sense of the word, of us all.”

equipped with the skills and learnings I describe above are needed more than ever. Thus we find that there are two kinds of educational crises that we face in the country – one from rural and less privileged schools where basic learning itself is a stupendous hurdle to overcome and the other from privileged schools where privatization and the focus on output reduces education to a mere commodity that creates efficient people without, possibly, a moral compass. A transformed education needs to address these issues besides of course inculcating in students the joy of learning. Educationists need to take seriously the call that education isn't for education's sake alone but to create 'human beings', in the full sense of the word, of us all. The New Education Policy (2019), experts have suggested, focuses greatly on outcomes and unlike previous reports and policies mentioned by Father Kunnankal, fails to address issues of diversity, secularism and gender. The Christian community in India which has made a mark in the past in the field of education can and should rise up to the new challenges of providing for an education that does not merely provide for a person's economic or material needs. It should be engaged in the creation of a people who are guided by a moral compass in which truth, justice and humanity prevail.

(Dr. Joy L.K. Pachuau is Professor at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru Univeristy, New Delhi. She can be reached at joy.pachuau@gmail.com)

Education for Transformation

Prof. Sybil Thomas

Universities and the Higher Education sector at large are going through a process of transformation by a “widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide connectedness in all aspects of contemporary life”. (Held et al. 1999:2.)¹ Higher education sector has become a key agent in the globalisation process. Through teaching, research and community engagement, universities contribute to the flow of information, technology and people across the globe and, in the process; they – some more than others - become key partners in the development of sustainable, equitable societies within and across national borders (Singh 2011)². On the other hand, in performing their role as agents of social justice for an equitable society, universities and higher education are called to be transformational rather than transactional, in its relations with various stake holders. We need to be transformational in content and in the processes we adopt and transformational in relation to our stake holders. As a response to the cover story article, we delimit our stake holders to students and society at large.

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Though the above quote is related to University education, it is true for every level of education. It is imperative to understand that educational systems are themselves going through transformation (involuntary or voluntarily) and yet we need to be cautious in performing our roles as transformational agents.

Discourses in education seem to show that the education sector is going through “*Silent crisis*” (Nausbaum, M.C. 2010).³ The nations in their education “discard certain skills” as they “thirst for national profit.” She refers to this unnoticed crisis as, as being far more dangerous to the future of a democratic society: a world crisis in education. Society today looks at Education as a commodity that can be traded in the global market. We have adopted a model of development where education is being considered for “economic growth”. Hence given that economic growth is so easily sought by society and individuals, too few questions have been posed about the direction of education as well as that of democratic society itself!

In addition to the points highlighted by Fr. Tom Kunnankal, I would like to reflect on THREE questions: To what extent do we allow our education to be guided by the “Profit motive”? What kind of individuals do we want from our educational systems? And what do we understand by being agents of social change through Education?

1. To what extent do we allow our education to be guided by the “Profit motive”?

Our educational systems need to address the fact that the profit motive is driving education at all levels. The concern here lies in the fact that it affects the kind of education we provide, who is able to access our educational systems, and our rationale for educating our children. We see that the profit motives generally invests in subjects that narrowly limit the purpose of education to teaching literacy (not literacy related to reading, writing and computational alone) and skills. Skills related to technology, science or literacy in itself is not problematic, sometimes even essential. However, not at the cost of abilities associated with the humanities and arts. These subjects are necessary for developing critical thinking; the ability to transcend local loyalties and to approach world problems as a “citizen of the world” and finally to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person. Society has long considered education to be an instrument for the progress of civilisation. This progress hinges on these essential skills. Though Nausbaum (2010) argues that these skills can be enhanced through the Arts and Humanities alone, my concern here is on the outcomes that these subjects bring out. However, whether at the national, state, regional or at the individual level it is seen that priority and investment of economic resources are not done for subjects like humanities and the arts. Behavioural outcomes, outcomes related to self-development and development of the affective domain are not the concerns that are deliberately reflected upon. This problem seems to be more and more evident as we see that concepts, such as outcome based education which limits education to quantifiable outcomes, are guiding our understanding of quality. This raises concerns that we need to engage with.

Access to our educational institutions is another area that is affected by the profit motive in education. Needless to say that education is being privatised at all levels. Hence, the ability to get access to education is and going to be a matter

¹ Held, D. McGrew, A. Goldblatt, D., and Perraton, J. (1999). *Global Transformations: Politics, economics and culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

² Singh, J.D. (2011). *Higher Education in India – Issues, Challenges and Suggestions*. In book: *Higher Education, Edition: first, Chapter: Higher Education in India – Issues, Challenges and Suggestions*, Publisher: LAMBERT Academic Publishing, Germany, Editors: Shireesh Pal Singh, Kiran Lata Dengwal, pp.93-103

³ Nausbaum, M.C. (2010) *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

of privilege for only the economically advantaged sections of society. With a decrease in public funding and an increase in government regulations, most of the minority run institutions and institutions of repute are leaning towards the option of becoming private institutions. With this kind of a trend we will see that access to education and higher education specially will be greatly affected. Even at school education, it is evident that “good educational institutions” are the private institutions. Those who get access to these institutions is the socially and economically privileged section of society. Therefore, they are able to occupy in turn higher positions in society and their earning capacities are enhanced due to the “good” education they have received. This is a cyclic process and this profit driven educational process will keep widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

To some extent these changes are being externally imposed but a line of caution is also that educational systems too have taken shortcuts – by teaching without critical engagements which have made it easy for the system to succumb to external social and economic pressures.

2. What kind of individuals do we want from our educational systems?

Since the time of Paulo Freire, the world also knows that the education system can merely train people to fit like cogs into the wheel of an oppressive society, can promote the ‘culture of silence’ and can serve as mere propaganda for the ruling classes. Education needs to develop critical thinking in every individual. That will help to build societies that are progressive, just and equitable. Even today, this skill in education has somehow been sacrificed for narrow gains of society. Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach which attempts to help students question and challenge domination, and the beliefs and practices that dominate. In other words, it is a theory and practice of helping students achieve critical consciousness. In this tradition, the teacher works to lead students to question ideologies and practices considered oppressive (including those at school), and encourage liberatory collective and individual responses to the actual conditions of their own lives.

The question then is whether our institutions and our practices seem to encourage critical thinking in their students so that their education can be truly transformative and liberating, thus enabling education to be an agent of social change. As mentioned by Fr. Tom, this stems from the need for education to be an agent of social change and an agent of social transformation.

3. What do we understand by being agents of social change through Education?

To address this question, we would use a definition. Could we consider Education as, “*a question of affecting of becoming private institutions. With this kind of a trend we will see that access to education and higher education specially will be greatly affected. Even at school education, and as it were upsetting, humankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life*”⁴? This definition of education attempts to acknowledge the great need for critical thinking and creativity as the core values of education and not merely the transaction of information as its function. As stated earlier, economic policies have not only affected, but guided and determined the flow and kind of knowledge and information in society. We need a system of education that not only transfers information and knowledge but to share information and knowledge that may unsettle beliefs, challenge *humankind's criteria of judgement, determine values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life*.

How can we accomplish this? It is through the living out of the kingdom values that we have been commissioned to do. Education is an act of love, an expression of love for children is what most educationists believe in. If that is so, we need to actively participate in creating through education a world that is Just and Humane. We are called to reconcile the world back to its creator through the process of education. Privatisation of education, driven by profit motives alone, will continue to stay, corruption will take more subtle routes and the economic disparities will be on the rise. In the midst of all these uncertainties for us in education our mission remains the same, strengthened by our faith in the Lord of our mission. “*Our Mission⁵ in Education is to provide: An Education, of quality and relevance to all, and in particular, to the marginalized sections of society; an education that frees persons from social conditioning (such as caste, class, gender and other culture-linked prejudices); that leads the young into the sacred space of the human person making them aware of the inalienable human rights of every individual and group. This helps to foster pluralism, cultural and religious diversity, individual and collective freedom and respect for and appreciation of differences.*”

In conclusion, *the question should not be whether we can afford to believe in such purposes in these times, but whether we can afford not to* - Faust (2009).

⁴ Frazer sj. (2018) Education for Evangelization in today's Indian Context (Unpublished paper) citing (Pope Paul VI, Letter on Evangelization 20)

⁵ CBCI Commission for Education and Culture, All India Catholic Education Policy, May 25, 2007. CBCI Centre, 1, Ashok Place, New Delhi – 110 011.

(Prof. Sybil Thomas teaches in the Department of Education, University of Mumbai.
She can be reached at sybilayasha@gmail.com)

Transformational Education: A Christian Perspective

Rev. Valson Thampu

The word 'transformation', used especially in context of institutions, makes me feel at once uneasy and amused. This is not cynicism. This stems from my experiences with Christian institutions of education and health care. Of course, nobody is, in principle, against 'transformation' per se. People have difficulty only with having to change. We are open only to that special genre of transformation, if there is such a thing, that does not necessitate any change from the status quo and its set practices.

This is nothing new. Jesus faced it through the 'rich, young man' (Mtt. 19:16-30) who approached him for a shortcut to eternal life. Jesus read him aright. Put him to the test. Asked him to accept the prospect of a radical change: from being a 'rich young man' to being 'a young man'. He fled from the scene.

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Count Leo Tolstoy uses an illustration for this phenomenon. You have an old house, which you want to renovate. You call an expert architect and assign him the task of renovation and restoration. A week later he returns with a plan for it. You are aghast: he wants to change this and change that! You want to keep the house exactly as it is now, even as you want it 'transformed'.

I have been part of many consultations, conferences and workshops on transformation. All of them proved rivulets running into the desert sand. They disappeared without leaving a trail! This used to confuse me in the beginning. Then the light dawned. Confusion gave way slowly to bemusement.

Comparatively speaking, I found doctors more open to change than the stakeholders in education. This is because

of the nature of the work they do. Healing involves transformation, both literally and metaphorically; even if healing, as it is practised institutionally within the matrix of medical technology alone, falls far short of transformation.

The root of the problem goes deep into religion as religion is inhospitable to transformation. Religion has a pro-status-quoist genius. Historically, every religion has resisted and criminalised radical 'change' as heresy. Christianity as a religion is no different, in this respect. Jesus, however, is the Word Incarnate of transformation. But when the Way of Jesus gets institutionalised - which is a practical necessity - it assumes a spirit contrary to the mission of Jesus. No one has seen it more clearly than Fyodor Dostoevsky. In the 'Grand Inquisitor' - a story that Ivan Karamazov tells his younger brother Alyosha, in *Brothers Karamazov*, the old Cardinal,

who is the Grand Inquisitor, warns Jesus, as he returns to the earth in the 16th century Spain in response to the ardent prayers of the people, that he has no 'business to add one word more' to what he had already said. The logic for this interdiction is: even

// It is not that transformation is an impossible goal. It is that, for it to become feasible, there is a precondition; namely, self-denial. Self-denial is difficult enough at the individual level. It is far more difficult at the level of institutions, including the church. //

a single word from Jesus can change the system radically. To the system stewarded by the Cardinal, change is death.

This radical tension between Jesus Christ and the genius of historical, institutionalised Christianity needs to be reckoned, if we are to understand in perspective our chronic and generic incapacity to change ourselves or to accept any change involving our vested interests. Jesus knew this. So he said, "He who wishes to come after me, must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." (Mtt. 16:24). It is not that transformation is an impossible goal. It is that, for it to become feasible, there is a precondition; namely, self-denial. Self-denial is difficult enough at the individual level. It is far more difficult at the level of institutions, including the

church.

Yet, transformation is the shaping goal of education, even as it is of spirituality. Jesus taught, not to increase the fund of human knowledge either then, or in the ages to come. He taught in order that human nature may be transformed. The goal of that change was clear in his spiritual vision: "Life in all its fullness". This gives us an important insight into the sort of difficulties immanent in the spiritual goal of transformation. What we routinely live for can be achieved - or, so it seems - without having to undergo any change on our part. Everything can be achieved by changing God to suit our convenience. Even a casual consideration of any or all of our religious practices will make this embarrassingly obvious. We are into the business of transforming God, which is the alternative to changing ourselves.

So, the very first thing we need to do, if we are to take even a timid, tentative step towards 'educating for transformation' is to orient education to 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10b). If the goal of education is only to fit young men and women for the market, it is a crime to transform them through education. Spiritual transformation could make them unfit for the market. We help them better by 'deforming' them through education, as we are doing expertly now. We call this, appropriately, the 'rat race'. We have turned education into a nursery for champion rats. 'Rat race' is the race in which rats compete, or the race in which all participants end up as rats. That is what I mean by 'deformation'. Of course, the world will applaud our achievements in education of this kind. It is often labelled 'educational excellence'. We may have outstanding or successful alumni to boast of. No one will bother to ask how they succeeded in the rat race, what unscrupulous methods were used, how low they sank in the process, or how wildly they swerved from the path of righteousness. I should know, for I have been witness to this nationally acclaimed Christian aberration for over four decades under the auspices of the most sought after college in India!

Yes, I made an effort to bring St. Stephen's College into alignment with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In particular, I tried to see if 'preaching the Good News to the poor' (Luke 4:18) could be incorporated into its educational vision 'and

mission. Predictably, it was the church hierarchy that turned against me first, and furiously. The whole country screamed at me for imperilling the 'educational excellence of St. Stephen's College by introducing social justice into the college.' Readers can, if interested, gather the bleeding details of this near-death struggle in my memoir, *On A Stormy Course* (Hachette India, 2017).

// ...the quintessential goal of education is the transformation of individuals and, through them, societies. Education that remains resistant to transformation can hardly be transformative education!

I offer here the essence of my experiences spread over four decades. While ordinary folks are not hostile to transformational changes, the social and religious elite see them as dangerous and subversive. The indefensible, and

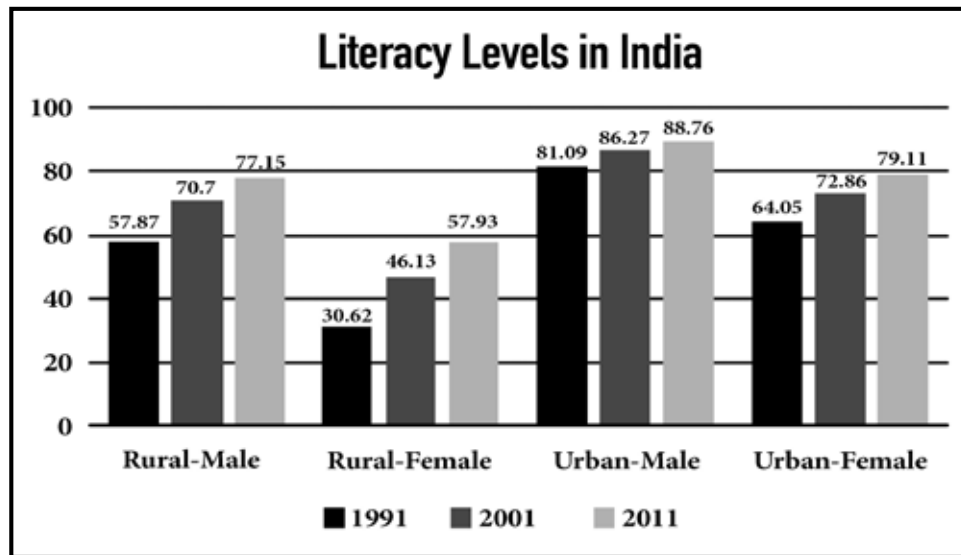
therefore unstable, vested interests of the elite are rooted in the status quo. For those who languish at the rock bottom of the social pyramid, radical changes alone hold out hope. This explains why Jesus chose his disciples from among the socially insignificant; the exception being Judas Iscariot.

Elitism is a Mammon-driven category. Mammon is the god of vested interests. For that reason, Mammon is also the god of the status quo. As a rule, idol worship is fiercely opposed to transformation. Correspondingly, wherever the need for transformation is resisted and resisted fiercely, what is in force is Mammon worship, even if it may have the 'smells, bells and yells' of Christian worship.

Experience has taught me this as well. To educate in the mode of Mammon worship is to prepare the way for our own degradation, devaluation and irrelevance. I have seen a clear correlation between the attitude of students to St. Stephen's College and the subtly Mammon-centred culture of the college over a period of four decades. There is no scope for loyalty or gratitude in Mammon worship. It is brutally transactional. Students pay for what they get. Having got what they paid for, they move on. Nobody is indebted to anyone. It is like going to a provision store and buying a bar of soap or chocolate. You pay for it. You take it home. You don't waste time thanking the shopkeeper for serving you sacrificially. You'd sound silly, if you did.

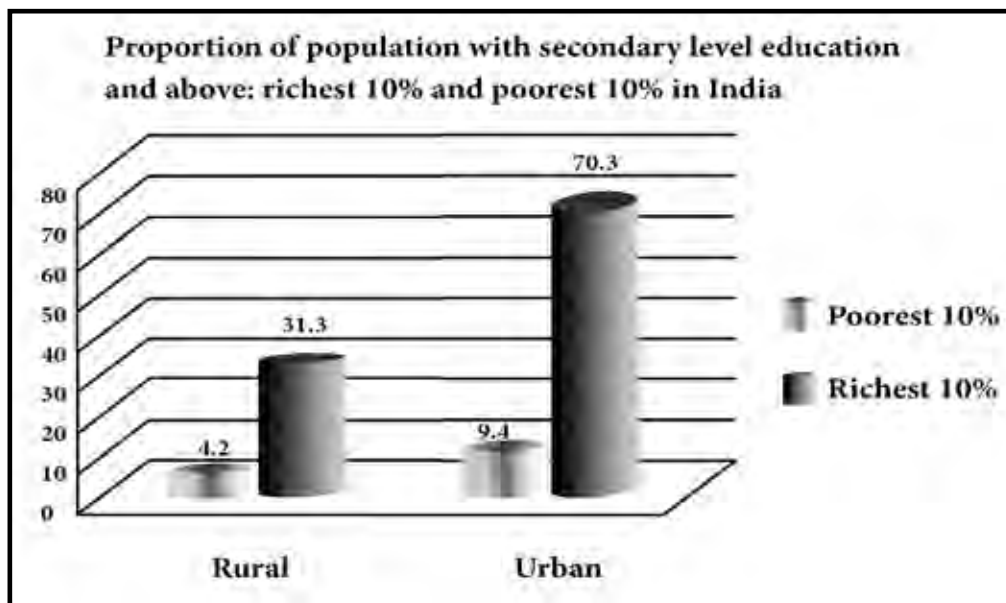
When we think about education for transformation, we must keep an eye on ground realities. We must consider this goal even out of inspired self-interests. At any rate, the quintessential goal of education is the transformation

FACTS



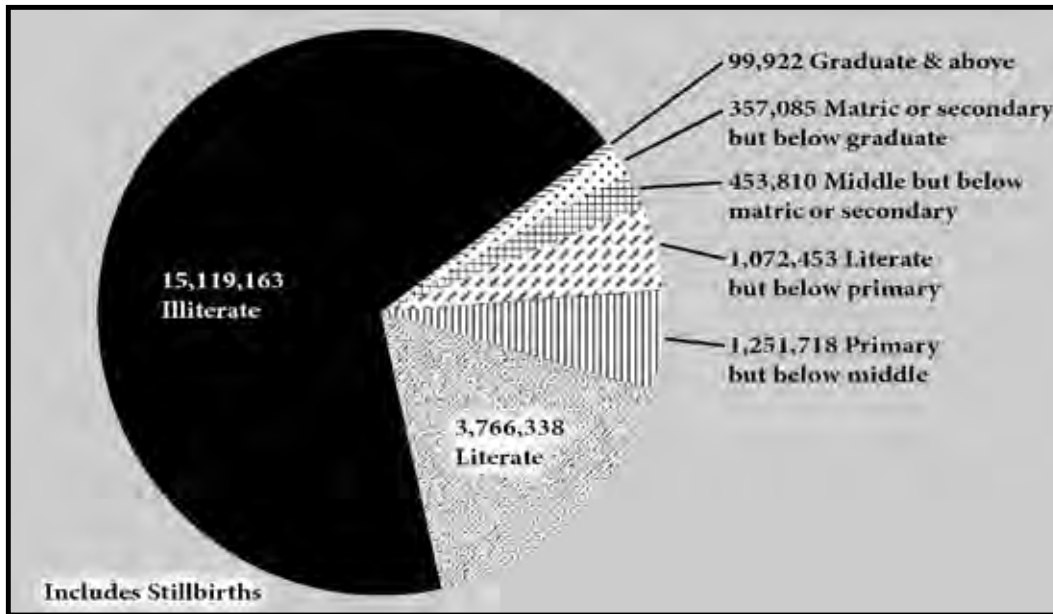
National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data on education covering a sample of almost half a million people across India shows that in the richest expenditure class, for every person who could not read, there were two who were graduates or above. At the same time, for the poorest class, for every person who was a graduate or above, there were 127 who could not read. The NSSO also found that the proportion of educated persons (those with secondary level education and above), increases eight times between the lowest and the highest expenditure class for India as shown in Figure above.

12



Status of school education in India

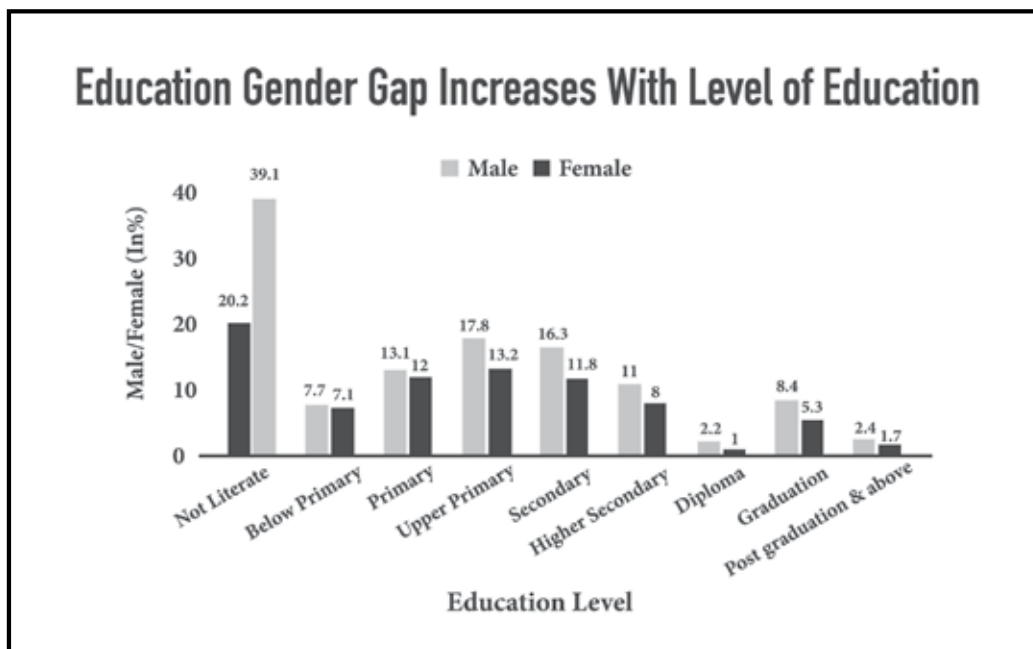
School Education in India is a major site of class and caste struggle - where the poor from marginalised social categories strive to be empowered towards a future of justice, prosperity and equity. How we shape our educational system is the key to how fast we can emerge as a modern, developed nation.



Source: <https://scroll.in/pulse/807877/19-million-women-in-india-have-given-birth-to-seven-or-more-children>

Educational attainment in present day India is not directly correlated to employment prospects - a fact that raises doubts about the quality and relevance of Indian education in terms of job prospects. Although estimates vary, there is little doubt that unemployment is high among university graduates. In 2017, 60% of engineering graduates remain unemployed, while a 2013 study of 60,000 university graduates in different disciplines found that 47% of them were unemployable in any skilled occupation. India's overall youth unemployment rate, meanwhile, has remained stuck above 10% for the past decade.

Progress has been made in expanding access to growing segments of India's society over the past decades, but providing relevant educational opportunities for a majority of the country's youth remains a pivotal challenge for Indian policy makers.



Continued from page 11

of individuals and, through them, societies. Education that remains resistant to transformation can hardly be transformative education! As Jesus said, the physician must heal himself first.

I conclude by pointing to the heart of the matter. Jesus, the Transformer of lives, was, in the eye of the world, a glorious failure.

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He had the courage to 'fail'. He came to die! There is no failure greater than that. Yet, this was no ordinary failure. It is failure only by worldly standards. By such standards, he should have been an unrivalled king clad in purple and sporting a glittering, scintillant crown. He should have crushed his enemies under his iron heels and gained control over the 'nations of the world', as Satan said he should.

A heart-breaking failure! Yet, he was King! So? Well, it is something like this: so long as we are chasing worldly goals and norms, transformation will remain a mirage to which we pay lip-service periodically. If oriented to the Kingdom of God, transformation becomes the very essence of what we need and seek, not an optional extra or an outlandish theological fix.

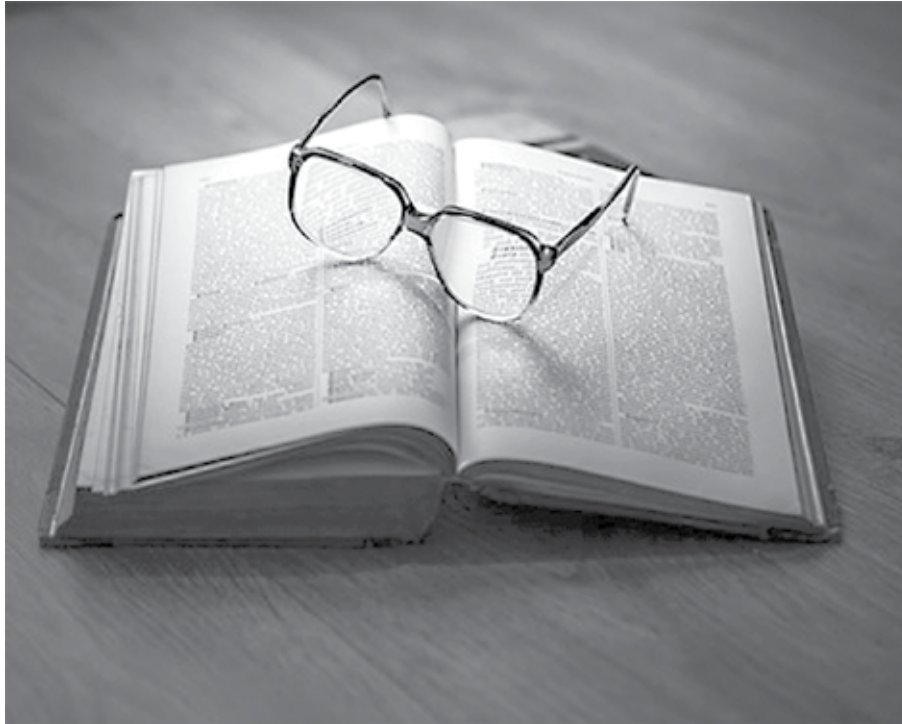


Photo: www.pixabay.com

**// Do we have the courage to educate...
...young men and women to be 'citizens
alike of heaven and earth'? If we do,
without buckling under the pressures
that the reigning scheme of things
is sure to mount on us, we may take
a few meaningful steps towards
transformational education. //**

The all-important question, therefore, is this: Do we have the courage to educate, as the Cambridge missionaries who founded St. Stephen's College in 1881 said, young men and women to be 'citizens alike of heaven and earth'? If we do, without buckling under the pressures that the reigning scheme of things is sure to mount on us, we may take a few meaningful steps towards transformational education. My will and testament, after seeing it all, is this:

education that stops short of the goal of transformation is no education. It seems like education, is anything but education. It is because education has lost its spiritual soul and transformative, liberative character that its beneficiaries are apt to be more corrupt and unconscionable than illiterate human beings today.

It helps to remember the words of St. Paul, "Knowledge puffs up; love builds up". (I Cor.8:1).

As things stand now, aligning ourselves to transformational education is a heroic thing to do. The journey is hazardous; so is the reward in the fullness of time.

*(Rev. Valson Thampu was the Principal of St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi.
He can be reached at Vthampu@gmail.com)*

Bringing Transformation to Learning: Experiences of a Teacher Cooperating at a Delhi Community School

Many years ago I was talking with a young new teacher in an international school and she told me that her friends couldn't believe she didn't have the time to hang out with them on a Sunday evening, as she needed to prepare for the next day. "Aren't you a teacher?" they asked. I was surprised by their understanding of what teaching involves. She told me that not only her friends but the majority of people in India think that teachers just have to go to school, open their book and make the students read. She also added that a lot of women decide to be teachers because they think it is easy. "Easy!?" I thought, a little shocked. 'But', I asked, "This is probably different among Christians, right?" She answered, "No, it's not".

I leave you to decide if it is true or false. But what I have observed from my experience in a community school is the central role that textbooks have in the classroom. The textbook is what the teachers read and repeat so that the students memorise it. The students study it and repeat it like a chant for the oral exams and know it by heart for the written ones.

But knowing by heart has nothing to do with the student's hearts. Students are not considered as active participants in the learning process. Their brains are regarded more as empty buckets that need to be filled with knowledge. What they feel or think about what they are studying is not part of the equation. From the beginning of their schooling, they learn not to get involved with what they are learning. Students are disconnected and disengaged.

Let me give you another example. Drawing. The textbooks that teach students how to draw, tell them what to draw and what colour pen to use. That means the student's job is just to copy. It is nothing about personal expression. If you inquire more thoroughly you realise that some teachers

consider drawing without copying a waste of time.

Another example of how students are left out of their own learning is that students have books and are expected to learn in a language they can't understand. Don't get me wrong. I'm totally convinced that kids in India need to learn English, but I question the method we are using to teach them. I have read a lot of textbooks for Standard One, searching for a book that would truly cater to the level of English held by the kids from community schools. I couldn't find any! The textbooks that are used in some community schools assume that the students already know English. For example, in one textbook, students are required to read and answer questions about a person, referred to in a poem, using present tense (which can be quite confusing, for example, 'I walk', but 'she walks'). Then, two pages later, the students are instructed to answer questions about the person using past tense. Not only do students need to understand the meaning of the poem, but they are also expected to use the correct grammar for referring to a third person in both present and past tense. If we put ourselves into the learners' shoes for a moment we would probably think "I don't understand this, so I won't bother. I'll just wait for the teachers' answer". And yes, that is exactly what the students think. The textbook is not child-centered or relevant and as a result, the students are disconnected and disengaged.

So, how have we responded?

The international school where I teach sent me to the Christian community school to try to find different ways to transform the students' learning experience. Learning is not just simply memorising or acquiring knowledge. Learning is being able to apply understanding and skills to many different contexts and connecting what one is learning with

everyday experience. Children are born equipped to learn, they are curious, they want to make sense of the world they are living in, they are willing to explore to find answers, and they want to express themselves. The process of learning needs to involve students and encourage and facilitate them to learn and explore further. Some ideas for transforming the students' learning experience have been more successful than others, but all have been useful to get a deeper understanding of what works and why.

My approach has been holistic. I have been working towards turning the classrooms into a more child-friendly environment. I have been encouraging teachers to organize their classes of forty kids into groups so that the students can be working on different tasks with different resources. I have prepared and provided resources that can be used in these groups. These resources help students to engage with the topic by giving them hands-on learning experience, they give students the opportunity to learn alongside their peers, and they cater to students who have different learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).

But my main role has been to provide teacher training. I have tried many different methods; I started with a theoretical approach. I have spent time trying to help the teachers understand how God created the kids and how the dignity and uniqueness of each student needs to be taken into consideration when teaching. But this theoretical approach did not result in any difference in the classrooms.

I then tried to help the teachers experience for themselves different ways of learning. They played games, used different resources, and had fun. The teachers commented, "I didn't know I could learn and have fun". But in the following lessons, I didn't see any difference in their classrooms. I tried to ask them to approach learning from the perspective of the child but it was difficult for the teachers to understand the mind of the student and this did not bring change to the classroom. Then I tried something else, and this time, for the first time, I could see changes in the classroom.

The method that brought the first signs of transformation was to divide the class into groups and then to take one of the groups of students and the teacher aside and teach the group myself in front of the teacher. After the teaching, I would spend time with the teacher debriefing on what happened during the lesson. I would ask questions about the style of teaching, the value of the resources, and how they could gauge whether the students understood the lesson. After that, a second group of students from the same class came and this time the teacher taught the lesson. I could immediately see through their teaching how much they understood of what we were doing and if they had grasped

what was happening with the students. After every group, I had time to debrief with the teacher. Instead of waiting for the following year to put into practice the learning (when the lesson would need to be taught again), the teacher was able to take what he or she learned and, teaching exactly the same content, apply his/her learnings immediately to the next group. I think this way of training helped them not only to understand a different approach to teaching but to feel more confident in using new resources and introducing changes to their classes.

But it is not just my work.

The model we are developing is a model that is mutually beneficial to two communities (the international school and the community school), without creating direct economic dependence. We think this model has a lot of potential and we are trying to consider different ways to make it replicable, but making adjustments for each context. Several people from the international school - parents, teachers and students - are involved in the community school in different ways. Some parents have helped by giving the community school students time to practice their oral English, some students from the international school have helped by practicing English or Math with them, playing games that develop different ways of thinking (like strategising) and organising Sports Days, etc. One teacher is involved in a programme that seeks to give the community school students the opportunity to use resources in groups so that they learn how to play with one another, learn decision-making skills, and learn how to care for others and for the toys and games. Another teacher is building furniture that helps facilitate group-work and a third teacher has sourced some second-hand laptops and is teaching kids how to use this device and how to type. The wider community - and Christian schools, in particular - can contribute to bringing transformation to the classroom environment.

Being a teacher is not easy as some may think but is so worth it! To see kids getting involved with their learning, getting to know themselves, their gifts and talents as God's special creation and to see teachers who have been teaching for years dare doing something in a different way is a privilege. Teaching is partnering with God in the blessings he wants to bring to everyone's life, in the plans He has for all.

(The author of this article is a teacher at an international school in Delhi and has been involved in a local community since 2012)

Living Out the Faith: Doing the Good Work

The CGM Prathana Bhawan was set up by Pastor Suwendu Parida in 2004 at Panki Block, Palamu District, Jharkhand. The vision and mission of the church is to serve those in need by providing for both their physical and spiritual needs through the love of Christ. A thorough understanding and conviction of wholistic mission which is grounded in Scripture motivated the church to put its belief into practice through many avenues of work among the communities in Palamu District. A clear calling received from God by the Pastor that one must serve the needy has motivated him in doing development work.



Photo: Suwendu Parida

Having this passion, he started off by visiting the homes of people. They were initially reluctant to open their homes and hearts to him. He patiently tried to relate with them so that they can share their problems too. During one of his home visits, the family shared their health concerns to him. The Pastor and the church mobilised a health practitioner and arranged for a doctor to organise a free health camp. The camp was held in 2014, in one of the interior villages where there is no access to health care. It was held for about 2 to 3 days and medicines were distributed for free. An awareness camp was organised in 2019 on 'T.B. Awareness and Care' among the communities. This camp provided awareness on how to take care of T.B. patients. The church helped the families in accessing free T.B. medicines from Government Hospitals. Since these camps were organised, the church started doing various other social development programmes.

- **HIV & AIDS Awareness & Care** - This programme was held in 2015. Some of the HIV positive patients were linked with the Government clinics and hospitals, so that they could access the ART medicines freely.
- **Formation of Self Help Groups** - The church is engaged in several other programmes like formation of Self Help Groups among the women. SHGs were formed in 2017 by the women of the community themselves. It is now developing and working very successfully. As a result of this, many women were able to gain self-confidence and became an inspiration for the other women in the community.
- **Installation of Hand Pumps** - The church mobilised the members to install hand pumps for the community. In 2017, a need assessment survey was done in the village and based on the report, public hand pumps were installed in 3 districts - Palamu, Garhwa and Latehar villages.

- **Providing free clothing and food to the poor** – This service was started in 2015 and every Wednesday, the church distributed food, clothes and other necessary items to the poor in different parts of Palamu District.
- **Awareness building in the community on various social issues** such as domestic violence, human trafficking, children at risk and climate change were given to the communities to sensitise them on these crucial issues.

It was the community's acceptance of the development works that made all the difference in their way of life and perceptions. They now go to hospitals for treatment of health problems and do not rely on blind faith for healing. Water scarcity has also been reduced due to the hand pumps which were installed by the church. The community cooperated in development work done in the village and they were very keen about it. There were a few people who were taking this into a religious matter and trying to oppose it but this did not hinder the church in living out their faith which motivated them to do the good work.

The work of the CGM Prarthana Bhawan has therefore created a significant impact on the lives of the community in many ways. The Pastor rightly said, "It is very important for Christians to put their faith in action by doing development work. We are called not only to care for the soul but also care for their needs and do whatever is possible because this is what Jesus also instructed us to do."

(Pastor Suwendu Parida is the Pastor of the CGM Prathana Bhawan, Panki, Jharkhand.

He can be reached at cgmpanki@gmail.com)

Books on our Desk

After you Believe: Why Christian Character Matters

by N. T. Wright

Published by Harper Collins, 2010, 320 Pages.

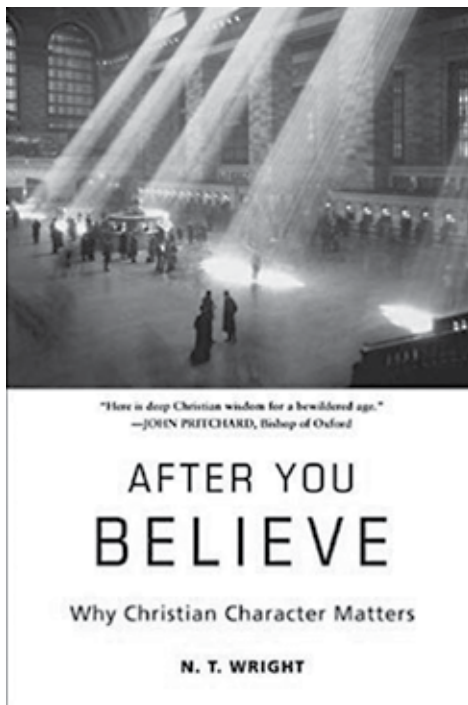
Ms. Shobana Vetrivel

In this book, N. T. Wright responds to the gap between faith and practice in the Christian life - between what Christians believe and how they live. The Christian life is in danger of becoming just a matter of mental or intellectual assent to a proposition with little emphasis on the transformation of character. Being a Christian is not just following a set of specific do's and don'ts and neither is it a journey of self-discovery and doing what seems right to you. Wright argues that what matters "after you believe" is character, not simply obeying rules nor spontaneous self-discovery. The aim of the Christian life is the life of fully formed, fully flourishing Christian character.

What Jesus calls believers to is not specific acts of behaviour but a certain type of character, a way of being human that comes by following him. This character is developed through the practice of virtue, specifically the practice of Christian virtues. Virtue can be a difficult world because it carries the undertones of works and it can be seen as leading to legalism and justification by works. But Wright emphasises that grace is the key to it all. Virtue is a work of grace but it is not a work that happens automatically, easily or without the Christian equivalent of the hard moral effort.

Wright provides a brilliant insight into the outcome of the practice of virtue. Virtue is "what happens when someone has made a thousand small choices, requiring effort and concentration to do something right and which doesn't come naturally and then on the thousand and first time, when it really matters they find that they do what's required automatically. Virtue is what happens when wise and courageous choices have become second nature."

This book is essentially a book of practical theology. Wright delves deep into the theology of the practice of virtue by the Christian, as opposed to the secular practice of virtue, by bringing out the vision of the Christian life outlined in



the New Testament. The Christian life, according to Wright, is to recapture the New Testament Vision of Christian living as "anticipating the ultimate reality through the Spirit-led, habit-forming, truly human practice of faith, hope and love, sustaining Christians in their calling to worship God and reflect his glory into the world." This echoes the calling on Israel to be rulers and priests in this world.

Wright calls on Christians to do the hard work of developing the habits of the heart, mind and life that reflect this vision. The focus is on developing habits that anticipate in the present, the life of the future Kingdom and demonstrate in advance the values of the Kingdom - truth, beauty and justice through worship and stewardship. But

the steps it takes to get to that point involve hard decisions and making choices that run counter to natural human desires, aspirations, instincts and expectations.

In the last couple of chapters, Wright emphasises that these habits are formed in and through community but always with an outward vision to reflect God's character to the world around us. The inner dynamic of virtue is to always point outward to God in worship and to the world in mission. Wright doesn't spend too much time on the steps to develop these disciplines and habits which would probably be the only downside of this book as it's not focussed on the practical. But this book certainly brings out the crucial need for Christians to be people who display a certain kind of character in the world, which is sorely lacking, despite the right knowledge and beliefs.

(Ms. Shobana Vetrivel has a background in social development and has worked in both development and ministry settings. She is currently working as the Director of Operations for Delhi School of Theology.

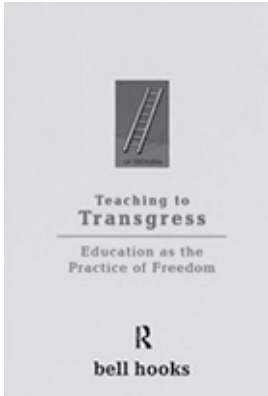
She can be reached at shobana.vetrivel@gmail.com)

Teaching to Transgress

By Bell Hooks

Routledge, New York & London, 1994, 216 Pages

Mrs. Joan Lalromawi



In this book, the author Bell Hooks presents the challenges experienced by teachers or learners in various educational institutions. Hooks describes her childhood dreams of going to school to learn but gradually her belief in education was altered as she experienced racism in school and further on in the university. All her school experiences made her realise that education and learning was about information only. It had no relation with how one lived and behaved.

Hooks mentions how obedience and not the zealous will to learn was expected in her school. As Hooks entered college, the primary lesson was reinforced: that they should learn to obey authority. In graduate school, the classroom became the place where she struggled to maintain the right to be an independent thinker. To become a critical thinker was often seen as a threat to authority. Excitement in higher education was viewed as potentially disruptive of the seriousness assumed to be essential in the learning process. Hooks argues that we need an education that transgresses beyond and across boundaries of what is acceptable so that we can think and rethink, create new visions and make it a place where education is the practice of freedom.

In this book, Hooks refers to Thich Nhat Hanh, who speaks of the teacher as the healer. His approach to knowledge calls on students to be active in their own learning process. Whereas Paulo Friere was primarily concerned with the mind, Thich Nhat Hanh offered a way of thinking about pedagogy that emphasises wholeness, union of mind, body and spirit.

The book offers a fresh perspective to the concept of education as it helps us rethink the prevailing educational practices and pedagogy of our modern times. This is a rare book about teachers and students that dares to raise questions about the future of education. The book combines practical knowledge of the classroom with a deeply felt connection to the world of emotions and feelings. It is relevant for teachers and students who are interested in transformational educational - who dare to think beyond the lines of sexism or racism or any other differences.

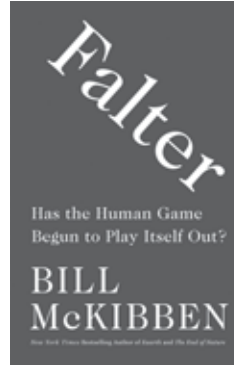
(Mrs. Joan Lalromawi works with EFICOR. She can be reached at joan@eficor.org)

Falter

By Bill McKibben

Henry Holt & Co. Pub. 2019, 304 Pages.

Mrs. Julie Bellingham



Bill McKibben's newest book gives us a grim, but still somewhat hopeful, perspective on the pressing topics facing humanity – namely, climate change, artificial intelligence and genetic engineering. McKibben begins by demonstrating that our pursuit of continual economic growth is having a devastating impact on the environment and we are now in uncharted territory. Additionally, the development of new technologies,

such as artificial intelligence and gene therapy, if left unregulated could alter what it means to be human. Unlike any other time in history, our sheer size and acceleration means that our decisions carry enormous risk. McKibben fears that our own survival is threatened - hence, he asks, 'Has the human game begun to play itself out?'

McKibben's investigation into the forces that have brought us to this point is a little depressing. Radical inequality has meant that power and influence now lies in the hands of a very small number of extremely wealthy people – namely oil company executives and tech moguls. The novelist Ayn Rand, and particularly her ideas on individual autonomy and distrust of government intervention, are discussed in depth. At first, this seems to be veering off topic, but he argues that her libertarian ideas have strongly influenced oil company executives and tech moguls to pursue profit, innovation and progress, regardless of whether it pushes us towards 'ecological hell and posthuman meaningless.'

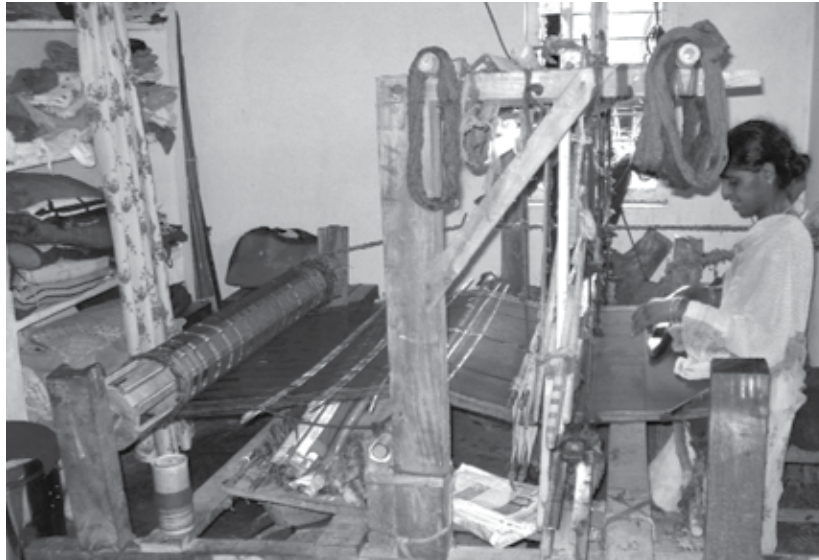
In case one starts to believe that resistance is futile, McKibben puts forward the argument that there is still hope. He argues that as a global community we should not leave the future of humanity in the hands of a few. His hope is that collectively we will make a decision to prioritise love and the wellbeing of all. McKibben strongly advocates for solar energy and a nonviolent mass movement and believes that together these can change the course of history. Falter is a well-researched book, written in an engaging style. It is well worth reading in order to understand the forces that are working to alter life as we know it and the urgency of responding to these issues before it is too late.

(Mrs. Julie Bellingham lives in Delhi and volunteering with EFICOR. She can be reached at jbellingham@gmail.com)

Weaves of Change

A weaver community crafts a new design for life in a flood prone area

J. Pullaiah, a resident of Gothakam village under Ghantasala Gram Panchayat in Andhra Pradesh's Krishna district, is a content man. He rarely let anything slip about his past but he is ever ready to narrate it to convince anyone on how to fight a hazard. The 130-odd weaver families of Gothakam were relocated by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in



1972 after a massive fire destroyed their earlier houses. However, they soon realised that the settlement, beside the Gunderu drain of the Krishna River, was prone to severe flooding during the rainy season. Being in a low lying area, their houses would remain flooded for three to four months every year. They did not have any alternate option either. This set the community into a downward spiral of poverty, laying a debt trap. Pullaiah recalls how indebtedness forced many of them to send their young children to work, instead of going to school. They used to come back home only when needed to assist in weaving. He himself lost a son due to ill-health and malnourishment. **Arthik Samata Mandal (ASM)** came in contact with the community in the course of their emergency relief activities following the cyclone of 1990. They realised that the problems of the weavers were manifold and they needed intervention on several fronts. This realisation resulted in ASM adopting an integrated approach while dealing with the vulnerabilities of the community to natural hazards. ASM's programmes worked to reduce the vulnerability of the communities, establish a safe and secure living environment and to improve the standard of living of the weavers by raising their levels of income.

Weavers in the settlement were perpetually in debt and depended on the master weavers for their credit needs. Master weavers provided yarn and also purchased the finished products from them. The master weavers understood markets and always exploited the weavers to their benefits. They took advantage of the weavers' dependence on them by giving loans to them at very high

rate of interest and paying them low rates for the products purchased from them. In an effort to wean the community off its dependence on the master weavers, ASM facilitated collaboration between the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad and the weaving community. A visiting team from NID helped the weavers in moving away from solely weaving traditional sarees in limited colours and designs to the lucrative dress material market.

From the year 1990, ASM supported by **SCF (UK)**, **Oxfam (UK)** and **Plan International** embarked on an integrated development scheme for the weavers. This included elements of flood control. It constructed 330 metres of flood bund along the Gunderu drain to prevent flood waters from entering the village. It upgraded pit looms to stand looms, provided financial assistance for the purchase of raw materials and provided market linkages by organising exhibitions and sales for the weavers across India. In addition, ASM provided vocational training to youths to shift to other livelihoods. ASM also facilitated formation of SHGs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). They built elevated houses and increased the height of roofs to accommodate stand looms. During the construction, it was made mandatory to have a work place, living place and kitchen. Government subsidies for housing were also accessed for this housing project. House owners also contributed labour.

The new implements and training have resulted in considerable improvements in their wage rates. Pullaiah says the wage has gone up from a paltry Rs. 3-5 per metre to Rs. 18-25 per metre. "Never in our lifetime did we imagine we would come this far," says Pullaiah. The community now are able to have a better quality of life as well as livelihood due to the house construction interventions.

(Adapted from the book 'Turning the Tide: Good Practices in Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction', published by EFICOR and Sphere India, 2010, pp. 88-89)

Christ Centered Schools to Educate Our Children

Mr. Benjamin Sem Haokip

Introduction

Luke 2:52. It reads, “And Jesus grew in Wisdom (*beyond academic excellence*)* and Stature (*more than physical and mental maturity*)* and in favour with God (*believing in an eternal God beyond this life*)* and all the People (*unlimited opportunity to positively influence others*).* Imagine the transformative power, influence and impact of Christian schools on individuals, families and communities if we consciously integrate God’s redemptive word and Biblical truths to our school curriculum and teach and guide our children from a very young age to grow in the likeness of Jesus in ‘Wisdom, Stature and in Favour of God and People.’

But what is happening with our schools?

In Act I, scene IV of *Hamlet*, during the Ghost Scene, Marcellus comments that “**Something is rotten in the state of Denmark**”. Imagine the same scene in our society or institutions we set up and run including Christian schools, we will all agree that something is not right. For the purpose of this article, we will focus on learning through formal schooling because it is the formal education system that develops our God given capacity to process and develop all our other learnings from a variety of situations and social interactions into meaningful information, knowledge and skills and helps us deal with different situations by determining our choices and guiding our decision making process daily.

How are we teaching our children?

Consider this, “If education is the transfer of information from teachers to students and the storage and reproduction of that information by students during exams; then Pen-drives will do a better job. Similarly, if teaching and learning is simply an act of access to information by the students, today, they have the best ‘Tool - their mobile phones’ to access whatever information they want anytime anywhere through google search engine”. We will all agree

that education, teaching and learning are much more than the transfer of information from teachers to students or access to information by the students. It is a carefully designed, well-planned and executed learning based on a certain pedagogy decided by the school leadership. In most of the formal schools, classroom learning is ‘teacher-driven’ where the personal inadequacies of a teacher has direct bearing on the students’ learning outcomes.

Holistic Education – Good practices of the Vineyard Academy using the A.C.E.’s[®] School of Tomorrow,[®] Asia curriculum and System of Education.

Let me cite some of the good approaches of learning practiced by a school known as ‘Vineyard Academy, using the School of Tomorrow Asia curriculum and System of Education, and based in Hyderabad. It is accredited by the Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.)[®]. The A.C.E.s vision was to not only meet the academic needs of children but also to provide Godly character in the learners. They follow a curriculum which is designed in such a way that it provides a foundation of Scripture, with Biblical principles, wisdom and Godly character building. It focuses on God’s plan for each individual child. It teaches critical thinking

“...education, teaching and learning are much more than the transfer of information from teachers to students or access to information by the students.”

skills for academic excellence. Students using A.C.E. curriculum study at their own rate and level of thinking. Instead of following a teacher’s lesson plan, each students sets his own goals. He learns to plan and meet his goals and also learns to become responsible for his actions. The approaches

followed by each of the A.C.E. schools are as follows;

- **Individualisation** – A student entering the A.C.E. curriculum for the first time is given diagnostic tests to determine his/her precise educational performance level. These tests also identify learning gaps. The student is then prescribed academic material to strengthen his/her specific weaknesses. The student succeeds as he/she receives a curriculum that meets his/her needs and then challenges

him/her to achieve higher academic levels. Learning in this way is the constant and time is the variable. Every child in this kind of school is able to learn at his/her own pace and he/she is able to master the study material before moving ahead.

- **Mastery learning** – In the learning centre (Vineyard Academy), each student moves ahead only when he/she has demonstrated mastery. Because each child builds upon concepts he/she fully understands and progresses when he/she is academically prepared to take the next steps, the knowledge and skill retention improves. Mastery leads to future academic achievements.
- **Character building** – It stresses on character building just as it focusses on academic success as it prepares students to meet challenges and opportunities in today's world. A.C.E.[®] embeds 60 character traits into the curriculum and presents role models who display and uphold high standards of personal character.
- **Traditional values** – Biblical values and principles are incorporated throughout the curriculum which help the students build a lifetime of meaningful and lasting relationships in accordance with Biblical principles.
- **Academic excellence** – Their unique learning programme provides the foundations for every child's success. It allows students to go on to higher education or other professional careers with confidence in themselves and their abilities.

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These principles and approaches if followed through bring positive outcomes in children's learning. Our schools should not be just focussed on mastery of academic subjects but mastery and awareness of one's self and potential as learning does not always happen inside the four walls of the classrooms/ schools. It should be noted that the supportive role of families and communities are also crucial factors in the individual child's learning and growth.

So what should be the basis of Christ-centred Transformative education?

We are taught that reverence for God and reliance on Him are set forth as the path to life, prosperity and security. The Bible urges us to be honest, having integrity, diligent, kind, generous, ready to forgive, truthful, patient, humble, cheerful, loyal, self-controlled and have prudence for the consequences that flow from our attitudes, choices, decisions and actions. It also teaches us that the poor are not to be exploited, the courts are not to be unjustly manipulated, legitimate authorities to be honoured, parents should care for the proper instruction and discipline of their children and children should duly honour their parents and bring no disgrace on them. I firmly believe that our education system and learning outcomes are to further our

character, faith in God, and to teach us principles that will rejuvenate our lives by guiding our daily choices and decisions.

What is missing?

Sadly, today, our education systems are far removed from the Biblical principles and teachings. Rather than strengthening the fundamental truths of the Biblical basis for our education system, we have blindly embraced the pursuit of worldly knowledge based on accumulation principle - 'more is good'. In the process, we have lost our discerning power and vision and come short of meeting the minimum standards the Bible teaches us or God requires from us. The result is diminishing values and principles that were once the hallmark of Christian education and life. We now witness how the most educated are exploiting their positions and powers to their own advantage to get ahead in life rather than by diligent, honest labour and hard work. It is hard to differentiate Christ followers from the rest when it comes to daily conduct and choices. Many of us are educating our children for worldly pursuits of the so called 'Good life'. Worse, our education systems promote such values and misguides our young minds to zealously pursue the good life.

What steps should be taken?

If our schools and education system is directed towards promoting such values to our younger generation and future leaders, it needs total overhaul. We can help our educators in laying a new education foundation based on Biblical principles and values upon which our children and their children's children will learn God's way from childhood that will differentiate them from the rest throughout their life. Through proper teaching and application of the word of God in our own lives and institutions that we establish and lead, it is possible to raise individuals, families and communities and nations whose God is the Lord as is written in Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

Conclusion

To this end, Christ-centred schools or transformative education is a lifelong calling and teaching is a mission with God's will and purpose in mind for the next generation.

References

¹ www.schooloftomorrowasia.com,
www.aceministries.com

(This article has been written by Mr. Benjamin Sem Haokip with inputs from Ms. Becky Tombing, Founder, Vineyard Academy, Hyderabad Branch, School of Tomorrow,[®]Asia - www.schooloftomorrowasia.com, www.lcaed.com Mr. Benjamin Sem Haokip works with EDIFY NE India. He can be reached at shaokip@edify.org)

Transformational Education

Dr. Jacob Cherian

Read & Reflect

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom 12:2)

When we look at Christian education, as experienced by learners and educators in real life situations, we realise that true education should culminate in a transformation. Transformation like education, is a continuous process.

If we look at the healing of the "man who was blind from birth" in John 9, we see one of the best examples of educational transformation. John could well have condensed the miracle into 8 verses, instead of dedicating 41 verses. Interestingly, this miracle, with the exception of the raising of Lazarus, occupies the most space in the gospel compared to Jesus' other miracles. We realise here that the role of John as an educator is also evident in the passage.

When we look at the first two verses, we note that the Lord Jesus saw a man who was born blind, while the disciples saw a case for a theological debate or an academic discussion – "Rabbi who sinned this man or his parents..." While Jesus saw a person in need, the disciples probably saw a blind beggar. Then in verse 3, Jesus prepares those around him for the works of God that are about to be displayed in him. Fortunately, the incident does not end there. It is easy for an educator to stop with an academic discussion, without any resulting action. In this passage, Jesus however goes further in order that the works of God be displayed in the blind man.

In verse 5, Jesus reminds them that he was the one who was the light of the world. We do not see the blind man crying out for help or calling out for someone to heal him, but Jesus saw him. Often times, an educator needs to see beyond what others see, even when there is no call for help. In an accident site, it's often not the loudest cry that needs the maximum help.

In the next few verses, we see the psychological aspect of transformation. The man was born blind and that was all he was used to. Maybe he had got used to his state. However, he had realised afresh his blind self and wanted to work towards getting his sight. Very often, the educator is able to

see the total despair in the learner. We see that now the blind man is motivated to walk through the difficult steps that led to the pool of Siloam. Somebody who has been full of despair now seems full of hope as he walks on the path to the pool of Siloam. He is now able to see. Then after psychological change we see conviction and behavioural change. The first step of an educator is - Identifying the one in need and motivating that person to overcome.

In 2 Cor 4:4, it is mentioned that "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ."

Of course, we would expect the story to end happily, with everyone happy with the outcome. Actual life doesn't work that way. The remaining verses imply that his parents and neighbours are now confused about him. What is outstanding at this juncture, is the confidence and fearless nature of this man born blind. He is very clear in verse 25, "One thing I do know, I was blind but now I see". The behavioural transformation in the education is now evident.

Finally, in verse 35, we see Jesus finding him after he was thrown out. This part of the story is very crucial. We see Jesus coming to him in his hour of need. Education and transformation are continuous processes and the educator must continue to be sensitive and available to the learner. We see the final outcome of this man in verse 38, when he says "Lord, I believe" and worships Jesus. His transformation was truly achieved by the master teacher.



(Dr. Jacob Cherian is the Head, Department of Physics at St. Stephen's college, Delhi University.
He can be reached at jacob1.cherian@gmail.com)

IDEAS FOR ACTION

AS A TEACHER

- Have fun and enjoy your lessons. If you're enthusiastic about your subject, then your students will likely be too.
- Model life-long learning - tell your students about what you are reading and viewing in your subject area. Tell them about the new developments in your field.
- Get to know your students. Greet them outside the classroom. Wish them a good weekend. Ask them about their family and interests.
- Create a safe environment in your class where failure is accepted as part of the learning process. If you're not failing, then you're not taking risks.
- Learn about your students and their context so that you can connect new learning to their already existent knowledge.
- One-on-one tutoring and mentoring helps in the all-round progress and development of the learner.
- Try to incorporate multiple learning styles to teach a concept.
- Seek to create a greater depth of understanding by moving beyond requiring the correct answer and instead asking students 'why?' Ask students to defend their answer and reward the defence, even if the answer is wrong.
- Seek feedback on your lessons. Ask a more experienced teacher if they can watch your lesson and then debrief with them as to what they thought were the strengths and weaknesses of your lesson. Reflect on what aspects of your lesson were well-received and led to student understanding and what concepts/activities were unsuccessful.
- Make an online platform to encourage discussion with the students to expand on their points of view and be exposed to a contrarian or alternative view on the things that were taught in the class.
- Encourage your students to use their learning to support the poor in the community.

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AS A CHURCH

- Explore whether your church could partner with a school in your area. Make an appointment for members of your church to visit the school to talk with the Principal. Offer help by assisting in the classroom, mentoring individual students or helping families purchase the materials needed for their children to attend school.
- Consider organising an after-school programme for children in a low income area. Play games with the children, provide simple lessons on values and ethics, encourage the children to participate in creative and interactive learning activities and provide extra assistance to children during the weeks leading up to exams.
- Pray for the administrators, teachers, staff, students and families in your local schools and for educational policy makers.
- Advocate for quality education in schools and higher educational institutions. You could write letters to the editor in the newspapers or write an article about the need in social media.
- Be informed of local education issues and needs in your area. Hold information sessions and invite the principal or a panel of school leaders to speak at your church.
- Pray and support organisations who are working to educate children, especially children from low income families.

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