

# JAAI CONFERENCE

St. Joseph's College, Trichy - January 17 - 19, 2020

A Talk on Jesuit Education and Networking

By **Dr. J. Felix Raj, SJ**

## **1. Introduction:**

Education is the most powerful mechanism, with which we can transform the world. The sustained economic development of any country is directly determined by its education system. Education is a Nation's health and wealth. A progressive nation is inevitably an educated nation.

Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. And so, investment in education pays the best interest. The aim is to form quality leaders, local and global, with strong human and spiritual values. And this necessitates network among educational institutions for the benefit of larger community.

With a world population of 7.80 billion people, we, as individuals and societies need to live together sustainably and harmoniously. We need to act responsibly based on the understanding that what we do today can have implications on the lives of people and the planet in future. Educational network empowers people to change the way they think and work towards a sustainable and harmonious future.

## **2. Jesuit Education:**

Educational apostolate has been synonymous with the mission of the Society of Jesus right from its inception. The origin of the Society itself in 1535 was in an academic milieu, at the University of Paris. At that time Europe was a web of kingdoms, and Paris was one of the great centers of learning. Instead of pursuing fame and fortune in the service of earthly kings, Ignatius of Loyola and his fellow students chose to be "Companions of Jesus" for the Greater Glory of God.

The Indian mission of the Jesuits lies at the very origin of their Order. It is to India that Ignatius of Loyola, the Founder of the Jesuit Order sent his greatest son, Francis Xavier in 1542, and to him and his collaborators, he gave that inspiration and those directives, which became the foundation of the Jesuit mission and method in India. Xavier was a zealous "missionary on the move". He worked in India for ten years, from 1542 to 1552, which is called the 'Xaverian decade'. India has also been the birthplace of missionary theories and the testing ground of missionary policies.

Francis Xavier sowed the seeds of Jesuit education in Asia. St. Paul's College, Goa, entrusted by the Portuguese to the Jesuits, under the zealous leadership of Xavier in 1544, was the first Jesuit educational institution in the world. It laid the foundation and became the birthplace for a worldwide educational network that emphasizes the essential connection between learning and faith and values. The later Jesuits carried on the legacy of Francis Xavier after the Restoration of the Society of Jesus through their academic, scholarly and scientific pursuits.

Jesuit involvement in education in India has a precious history and heritage. It is part of the larger global educational network. The Jesuits have been pioneers and vanguards in providing education to the rural poor, dalits and tribals. By opening the doors of their institutions to all, irrespective of caste, creed, language and sex, the Jesuits have exerted a healthy and harmonious influence on the educational system of India, and the mood resonates beyond its boundaries.

The Jesuit educational initiative is the largest private network in the world today. There are 3,960 educational institutions of various types in the world (schools, colleges, universities etc.) with 1, 41,000 teachers and 3.15 million students.

Perhaps the best-quality education in India is imparted by Jesuits who conduct not less than 66 HE institutions (including two universities), 18 Institutes of Business Administration and 200 high schools spread throughout the country, almost all of them among its most reputed. In them, more than 4, 10,000 students belonging to every religious, linguistic and socio-economic group, receive their education under the mentorship of around 12,200 teachers.

### **3. The Impact of Jesuit Education:**

Jesuits have contributed immensely, through education and research, to the character building of India and other Asian countries; whereby they have secured a place of pride and prominence for themselves and for the Church. Their vision and mission have formed men and women for others. Their contributions have been, time and again, applauded by the leaders, philosophers, thinkers, educationists and people of India and have become milestones in the history of enlightenment of races through cultural and spiritual upliftment.

- The Jesuit education has revolutionized the academic scenario of India tempering the system of imparting education with values that have become integral to human life and history.
- Christian and secular societies have borrowed and adopted Jesuit educational methods.
- Jesuit education reached out to all, disregarding class, creed and prejudice particularly to the marginalized.
- Jesuit education, because of its uncompromising quality is the most sought after all over the world. And the Jesuit institutions rank highest across countries.

- Jesuit education is holistic – forming men and women for others – providing a social dimension to education.
- Jesuit education emphasizes lay collaboration, sharing the spiritual heritage and pedagogy with the lay collaborators, preparing them for democratic and shared governance structures.
- In the South Asian context, Jesuit education promotes interreligious dialogue between different religions
- Jesuit alumni and alumnae have grown up to become leaders and have influenced various national and international spheres of activities in the spirit of Magis.
- Former Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh had applauded the works of the Jesuits (January 10, 2010 at St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata): ‘...The Jesuit missionaries chose the path of education in India and reached out to the hearts and minds of the Indian people... Jesuit institutions provide all-round education to the rich and poor, to the privileged and under-privileged and to the children of all faiths and religions...’

#### **4. Jesuit Educational Network:**

- By network, within a Jesuit context, we mean individual Jesuits / their co-workers or Jesuit institutions or their sister institutions, decide to collectively associate and cooperate, leading to concrete actions for a purpose or variety of purposes.
- Jesuit network is a way of proceeding, an accepted style of Jesuit apostolic venture, a way of enhancing apostolic efficacy beyond one’s known/prescribed boundaries of mission.
- Various aspects of Networking include:
  1. Reasons for Networking
  2. Types and levels of networking
  3. Approval and Recognition
  4. Grounds for membership
  5. Freedom to belong and take part
  6. Mode of exchange of information
  7. Structures of Co-ordination and governance

#### **5. The reasons for network:**

‘Networks are a facilitating structure of common discernment that allows us to be attentive, listen, and at the same time learn, permeate and reveal the dynamics of participation and engagement between institutions and people around our shared mission.’ (2<sup>nd</sup> Conference on Jesuit Networks)

#### **Jesuits work and therefore network < > Jesuits network in order to work.**

- a. Networking helps to connect with colleagues and with institutions;
- b. It helps to properly position our resources for mutual benefit;

- c. It opens new avenues to share our ideas and find new roles and ways of implementing them;
- d. Networking is a great opportunity to exchange knowledge of best practices, learn about the education techniques of our peers and stay abreast of the latest developments;
- e. Regular networking within our areas of work helps us to progress in our mission;
- f. A wide network of informed, interconnected contacts and collaborations means broader access to new and valuable information;
- g. Nurturing relationships with our fellow institutions is mutually beneficial. It raises our professional profile and broadens our access to opportunities and deepens our trust to face challenges;
- h. Networking builds invaluable social skills and self-confidence that can be taken anywhere. The more we network, the more we'll grow and learn how to make lasting and impactful connections;
- i. It is a strategy for mutual expansion. As it is a competitive world out there, we need to stand together to face the challenges.

## **6. Guidelines for Networking in the Society of Jesus:**

The Society of Jesus, through General Congregations and Jesuit Generals and Major Superiors, has proposed various orientations and guidelines from time to time emphasizing the importance of networking in the Order and its various works. I present a brief over-view of these guidelines.

1. GC 34 (Decree 21) held in 1995 asked the Society to recognize its own vocation as an international apostolic body called to develop global and regional networking.

Although numerous regional and international networks already exist, to exploit more fully the immense possibilities, additional global and regional networks must be created. Such networks of persons and institutions should be capable of addressing global concerns through support, sharing of information, planning and evaluation, or through implementation of projects that cannot easily be carried out within Province structures....

This directive and indeed desire were taken up at Loyola 2000, where the Major Superiors endorsed networking. GC 34 and Loyola 2000 embraced this new apostolic way of proceeding, probably thanks to a shared appreciation of networking as an authentic sign of

the times in the sense meant by Vatican II: something new, emerging simultaneously in different places, something both challenging and promising in the light of the Gospel, something reaching out beyond the borders of the Church.

In 2008, the 35th General Congregation identified the challenges of globalization to the mission of the Society of Jesus and, at the same time, highlighted the potentialities of being and acting as a universal body. International and interprovincial collaboration and networking have been marked as the ways to do it. ‘We encourage the Society’s government, at all levels, to explore means by which more effective networking might take place...’

The 1st Conference on Jesuit Networking was held in April 2012 at Boston College, USA on the theme, “Challenges from a Universal Mission”. This conference brought together religious and lay people, academicians, and practitioners from apostolic works and from different levels of Jesuit structures of governance, to initiate a line of reflection on the opportunities and ways to develop international networking in the Ignatian family; given the challenges that globalization poses to the universal body of the Society of Jesus.

The main goals of the conference were: a) to identify and analyze the main initiatives that already exist or are developing in the SJ; b) to analyze the key aspects for Jesuit international networking and identify concrete problems and questions that should be addressed; c) to present concrete proposals and recommendations for developing and improving international networking in the Society of Jesus.

In 2016, the 36th General Congregation continued this reflection highlighting even more the importance of Networking as one of the key perspectives in our contemporary way of proceeding, encouraging the different governing bodies of the Society of Jesus to “actively facilitate, foster, accompany and evaluate international and regional networks.”

As GC36th posed it, there is a clear need for research, systematization and formulation of challenges and potentials of the Jesuit international network of institutions in order to ease and maximize its impact as a transnational body with a clear universal mission.

Two years after the 36<sup>th</sup> GC and five years later to the first conference, a second conference was organized in February 2018 at Georgetown University, in order to continue the conversation and catalyze the connections of the practitioners, researchers and governance officials of the Society of Jesus.

Building on the success of the first Jesuit Networking Conference of 2012, this conference aims to: i) Deepen discussions among key stakeholders by engaging academic experts on networking; ii) Examine and evaluate networking initiatives that are already underway or in the planning stage; iii) Identify key obstacles to successful Jesuit networking and specific

ways to address them; iv) Produce a final document with concrete recommendations for Jesuit networking and v) Share its conclusions with the Task Force in Rome.

The wide experience of the participants encompassed global and regional networks including: Fe y Alegría, Jesuit Refugee Service, Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks, Educate Magis, Xavier Network, Jesuit Networking, International Association of Jesuit Business Schools, Colleges in Jesuit Business Education, Alpha Sigma Nu, Ignatian Solidarity Network, Christian Life Community and World Union of Jesuit Alumnae.

2. In response to the regional and global concerns and based on the guidelines of the Society of Jesus through Congregations and Conferences, the Jesuits have developed global and regional networks in many areas – education, social, pastoral, communication, research, youth, refugees, indigenous people, development studies and so on.
3. For example, we have in the field of education, networks like – Jesuit Educational Association (JEA), Jesuit Alumni Association of India, Xavier Board, All India Association of Christian Higher Education, World Union of Jesuit Alumni etc.
4. There are 82 Jesuit related networks at the global level.  
‘They are weaving Structures of collaboration – creating a space to foster international networking among Jesuit institutions.’
7. Most of these networks function within the purview of Common Minimum Programmes – with minimum objectives or activities of networking between members.

## **8. Urgent Need for Effective Networks:**

‘Networks are a structural response to a renewed mission that needs structures, processes, and strategies to be developed.’ (2<sup>nd</sup> Conference on Jesuit Networks)

### **a) Indian education system:**

In the existing global and regional contexts today and particularly in the context of the Indian educational scenario, we are called to promote regional, national and apostolic networks for peace and harmony. And the existing networks need to be strengthened. I place before you the various arguments for effective networking in the field of education and Alumni Associations in our Assistancy.

The education system in India is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. Knowledge is power. The more knowledge we promote, the more empowered we are as individuals and as a nation.

- i. As of today, even after 75 years of our independence, we have only 86 million graduates in India (8.5 % of the total population)

There are 921 Universities and 59480 Colleges of all types (including Stand-alone institutions) with 36 million students.

- ii. India is one of the few youngest countries in the world:
  - 65% of India's population is within the working age group of 18 to 59. The young people are the pride and future of India.
  - Dr. Abdul Kalam said that our young people must become ignited minds of India, unleashing the power within them.
  
- iii. Gross Enrolment Ratio target in Higher Education:

The 12th Plan Document had fixed targets of 25.2 % GER by 2017-18 and 30% GER by 2020-21.

As per All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2017-18, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education is 25.6%.

NEP 2019 envisages: increase GER to at least 50% by 2035.
  
- iv. New Education Policy 2019

Consolidation of current 800 (921) universities and 40,000 colleges into about 15,000 large, well-resourced, vibrant multidisciplinary institutions

All higher education institutions to be consolidated into three types of institutions:

  - Research Universities - equal focus on research and teaching
  - Teaching Universities - primary focus on teaching with significant focus on research
  - Autonomous degree-granting colleges - almost exclusive focus on teaching

#### **b. Private Universities:**

Universities in India, whether Central/State/Private, are established by different State/Central acts and adhere to the provisions laid down in the UGC ACT 1956. According to the laws, State Universities are of affiliating nature while private ones are unitary (single entity).

Private Universities operate as per the State Act within the territorial boundaries of the State where it is established. A private university will be allowed to start off-campus, study centers and off-shore campuses only after a period of five years.

The private sector is strong and potent in Indian higher education. This has been partly due to Government's decision to encourage private investment and participation. Different state assemblies took advantage of this initiative and passed private university bills. Only universities established by the Central or State Acts or higher education institutions empowered by the Parliament to confer or grant degrees are entitled to award degrees.

In 2005 there were only 20 private universities. But as of today we have 340 private universities. 78% of colleges in India are private colleges; of them 64 per cent are unaided and only 14 per cent are aided colleges.

It is a fact that there has been a quantum leap in the number of universities which are the temples of learning. It shows that there is a huge scope for the role of private universities as India has a huge potential in terms of opportunities in higher education. There is a huge demand for quality learning with a wider choice of subjects and an assurance of placement. Private universities can meet this challenge.

There is a felt need for independence and autonomy for HE institutions to emerge as world class centers of knowledge. As public expenditures are insufficient and public institutions suffer from political interference and government control, private participation becomes necessary.

### **c. Catholic and Jesuit Universities in India:**

“Networking allows for the deployment of new types of strategies that are attentive to local diversity but open to the benefits of international scale and coordination.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Conference on Jesuit Networks)

Jesuit networking is a strategy for mutual expansion and steady progress in our mission. Establishment of private universities or upgradation of existing colleges is a method of networking in the field of higher education.

There are 5 Catholic Universities in India: 1. Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati; 2. Christ University, Bangalore; 3. Xavier University, Bhubaneswar; 4. St Xavier University, Kolkata; and 5. St Joseph University, Dimapur.

We have as of now two Jesuit Universities in India: 1. Xavier University, Bhubaneshwar and 2. St. Xavier’s University, Kolkata.

**Kolkata Experience:** The Jesuits in Kolkata responded to an invitation from the Hon’ble CM, Mamata Banerjee and started the St. Xavier’s University, Kolkata. We tried with many options:

a) To upgrade the existing aided St. Xavier’s College to a university status, but because of some technical problems relating to minority status and state aid, we had to give up that option.

b) We proposed a public- private partnership model. This model did not work out.

c) St. Xavier’s College was selected as one of the 35 colleges for upgradation under RUSA scheme. But even after two meetings between MHRD and SXC, the proposal did not come through. Finally we decided to go private way and submitted out proposal (LoI) to the State Government of West Bengal.



The Bengal government was very cooperative and did all it could. The Hon'ble Chief Minister herself took keen interest in establishing this Jesuit University. The Government gave us 17 acres of land at New Town. Earlier we had acquired from the Govt. 6 acres of land. We had earlier acquired 6 acres of land from the Govt. for the same purpose.

The State Assembly passed the St. Xavier's University, Kolkata Act 2016 in December 2016. Our alumni joined hands and pledged their full support. We prepared a road map - Vision 2020 and began our journey.

Today our dream has come true. St. Xavier's University, Kolkata was inaugurated by the Hon'ble CM of Bengal in July 2017. In two years' time, we have an enviable 1850 students on the rolls. Our focus is on:

- Making SXUK into a world-class Jesuit University – a Centre of Excellence in Research and Innovation - with world-class network in the spirit of Magis;
- Fulfilling the expectations of people like the CM of WB who said: 'I want St. Xavier's University to become one of the best universities of the world. I am confident that the university will achieve this goal.'
- 'A Quality University with a new and forward looking vision' as envisaged by the NEP 2019.
- A University with a multidisciplinary atmosphere and liberal approach

We believe that with the Divine providence and the wholehearted support of our stakeholders, we shall be able to achieve our Vision 2025.

Many initiatives to start Jesuit Universities have been recently taken up in the country. It is a welcome move. We belong to an extensive and the largest educational network in the world.

It is a timely call to all of us to move forward and respond to the changing times and new demands.

#### **d. Jesuit Networks for Harmony, Peace and Transformation:**

India is a country of more than 1.3 billion people. It is a multi-religious, multicultural and multilinguistic country, known as the cradle of religions. But communal forces are dividing the country and destroying the secular credentials of the nation. India is witnessing too much of bloodshed in the name of fundamentalism.

All religions teach peace and promote mutual love for one another. Religion, as Sri Ramakrishna explained, is like a river leading its followers to the great Ocean of God. When the human relates to the Divine, there flows a process of the human being elevated to the realm of the Divine. 'To be fully human is to be divine'. No religion preaches hatred. A

true religion is transformative in nature, having the power to create ‘a new heaven and a new earth’.

It is not religion; it is not Hinduism or Islam or Christianity that are at fault. It is fundamentalism. It is those who use religion for their own narrow, vested interests who are responsible for the sad state of affairs in India. It is the outcome of their inadequate knowledge, their institutionalized perception of religion and their fundamentalist attitudes and practices. It is their selective and literal interpretation of their scriptures, which is unhistorical.

In today’s India, the need of the hour is harmony. The time has come for us to play a proactive role through our educational institutions and our educational networks. Whatever be our strategies and new initiatives, our priority should be harmony both at the global and national levels. Inter-religious dialogues and communal harmony must become part of our curriculum, promoting active participation from our students, their parents and alumni/ae.

- e. Let me conclude with a quote from the 2nd Conference on Jesuit Networks held in Georgetown University, USA: ‘Networks offer greater freedom to experiment and are places of innovation and creativity that allow us to balance our tradition with a necessary entrepreneurial and adaptive spirit.’**

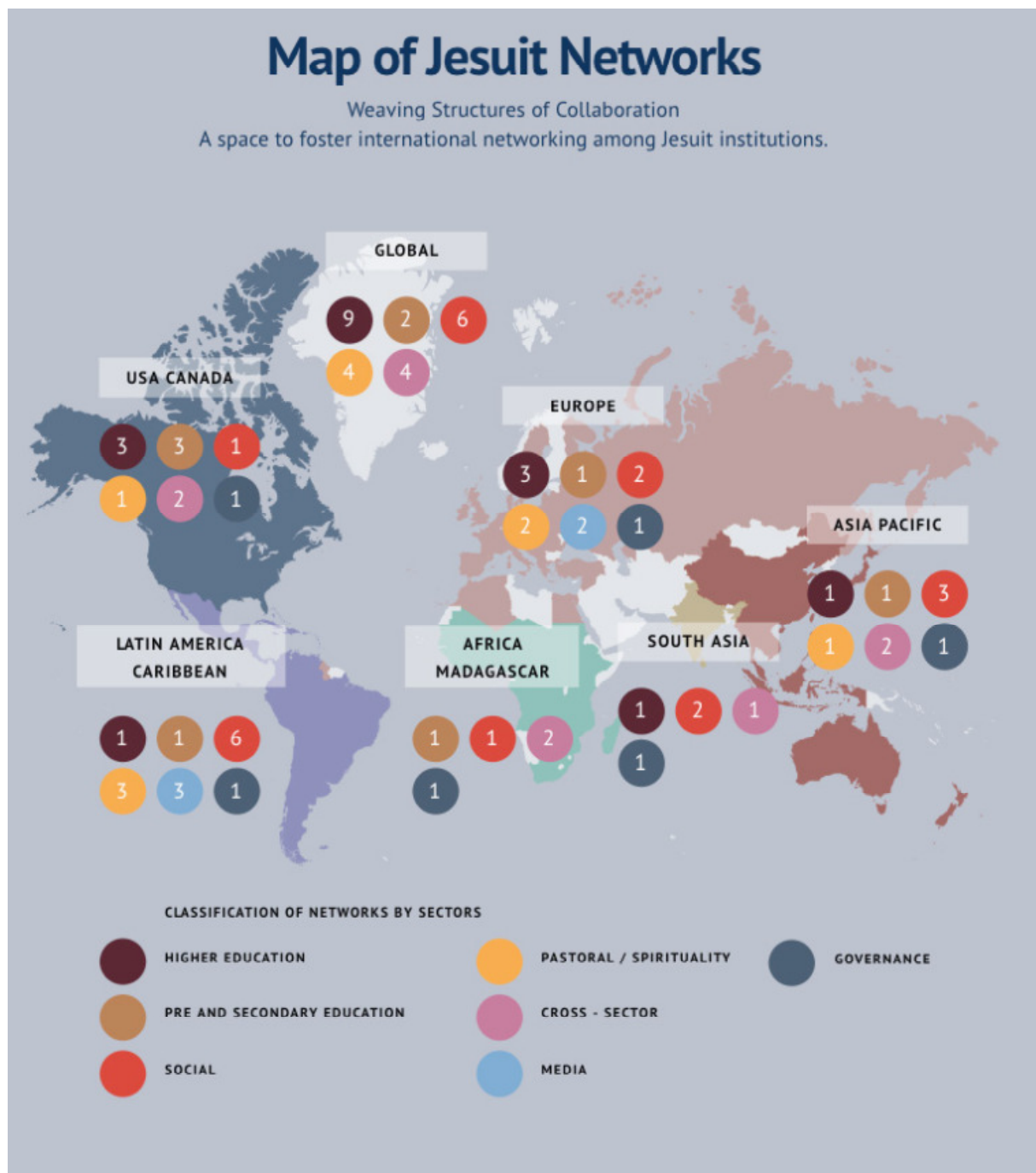
---

### **References:**

1. GUIDELINES on JESUIT NETWORKING in the SOCIAL AREA, [www.sjweb.info](http://www.sjweb.info) > documents > sjs > docs
2. International Networking in the Society of Jesus. Challenges from a Universal Mission, April 28-30, 2012. This conference brought together religious and lay people, academics, and practitioners from apostolic works and from various different levels of Jesuit structures of governance, to initiate a line of reflection on the opportunities and ways to develop international networking in the Ignatian family; given the challenges that globalization poses to the universal body of the Society of Jesus. For more information visit its website at <http://www.jesuitnetworking.org/>.
3. Prophetic Network for a Universal Mission: 2nd International Jesuit Networking Conference, Georgetown University, 15-17 February 2018, <http://jesuit.network>.

480 years of history in 120 countries and more than 4000 institutions....

Let's keep networking!!



Source: Prophetic Network for a Universal Mission, Document of the 2nd International Jesuit Networking Conference, Georgetown University 15-17 February 2018.