

## **A Case Study of Alumni Perspectives on the Contribution of Catholic School Education to Personal Growth and Lifelong Values: Cathedral Senior Secondary School, Lucknow, India**

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### **Abstract**

Education is not limited to academic achievement; it also contributes to the development of personality, values, attitudes and behaviours that may continue to influence individuals throughout their lives. Catholic schools have traditionally emphasised holistic development through academic learning, discipline, moral formation, service and interpersonal relationships. The present qualitative study examines alumni perspective on the contribution of Catholic school education to personal growth and lifelong values, with particular reference to Cathedral Senior Secondary School, Lucknow, India. The study focus exclusively on alumni experiences and perceptions. Four objectives were formulated to examine personal growth, lifelong values, educational experiences contributing to personal development and the continued influence of acquired values in alumni life. A qualitative case study approach is proposed, with written narrative provided by the alumni as the principal source of data. The study is expected to provide insight into how alumni understand the lasting contribution of Catholic education beyond formal schooling.

**Keywords:** Catholic education, alumni, personal growth, lifelong values, qualitative research, Cathedral senior secondary school

### **1. Introduction**

School education plays an important role in shaping not only academic abilities but also the moral and social development of learners. The influence of schooling may extend beyond the years spent in an educational institute, particularly when student internalized values and behaviours that subsequently become part of their everyday lives. Catholic education has historically emphasized the development of the whole person, combining academic education with moral, social and personal formation. Groome (1998) and Grace (2002) emphasizes the importance of holistic formation in education.

Cathedral senior secondary school, Lucknow is a Catholic educational institute with long institutional history. The school's official history traces its beginning to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the present institution is affiliated with central board of secondary education and is administered by the Catholic Diocese of Lucknow. School the school also maintained a cathedral school alumni association, demonstrating the continuity connection with the institute and its former students.

The alumni perspective is particularly valuable because former students can reflect retrospectively on their school experiences and consider whether the knowledge, habits and values developed during schooling continue to influence their lives. Existing discussion of Catholic education suggests that its contribution may extend beyond classroom learning to areas such as personal growth, compassion, respect, integrity and service as mentioned by Grace (2002), Bryk, Lee, & Holland, (1993). Research on Catholic school alumni has similarly examined the lasting influence of values oriented education and holistic formation among graduates as Greeley & Rossi (1966) stated.

Therefore, the present study seeks to understand how alumni perceive the contribution of Catholic education to personal growth and lifelong values.

## **2. Objectives of the study**

The study is guided by the following objectives

1. To examine the contribution of Catholic school education to personal growth of alumni.
2. To explore the role of Catholic school education in developing lifelong values among alumni.
3. To identify the aspects of Catholic school education that contributes to personal growth of alumni.
4. To examine how lifelong values acquired through Catholic school education continue to influence the lives of alumni.

## **3. Research questions**

The following research questions correspond to the objectives

1. How does Catholic education contribute to personal growth of alumni?
2. What role does Catholic school education play in developing lifelong values among alumni?
3. What aspects of Catholic school education contribute to personal growth of alumni?
4. How do the lifelong values acquired through Catholic school education contribute to influence the lives of alumni?

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Research design**

The study adopts a qualitative case study design to obtain an in depth understanding of alumina perceptions concerning their educational experiences. A case study approach is appropriate because the research focuses on a particular educational institute that is Cathedral Senior Secondary School, Lucknow and seeks to understand the alumni attached to their experiences within that specific context.

The study is interpretive in orientation because it seeks to understand how alumni makes sense of their school experiences and the way in which those experiences have contributed to their personal growth and values.

## 4.2 Participants

The participants from the study comprises 15 alumni of Cathedral Senior Secondary School, Lucknow. Purposive sampling was used to select alumni who have completed their schooling at the institution and are able to reflect on their experiences after leaving school. Variation in age, educational background and professional experiences was considered to obtain diverse perspectives.

## 4.3 Data collection

Data was collected through narrative written by the 15 alumni. Participants was encouraged to describe specific experiences rather than provide only general evaluation of the school.

## 5. Findings & Result

### Objective 1: Contribution of Catholic school education to personal growth of alumni

Alumni consistently described Catholic schooling as a foundation for their confidence, discipline, independence, and emotional maturity. Their reflections highlight how structured routines, teacher encouragement, and peer interaction shaped them into responsible individuals.

#### Participant statements:

- “The teachers encouraged me to participate in activities, and that helped me become more confident.”
- “The discipline I learnt in school still helps me manage my responsibilities.”
- “Classroom discussions made me more self-aware and independent.”
- “Taking responsibility in school prepared me for challenges later in life.”
- “Peer interaction taught me cooperation and emotional maturity.”

These replies demonstrate that personal growth was not limited to academic achievement but extended to the formation of character and personality, echoing Bryk et al. (1993) and Grace (2002), who emphasize the role of supportive school environments in nurturing broader personal capacities.

### Objective 2: Role of Catholic school education in developing lifelong values

Alumni identified respect, honesty, compassion, integrity, and responsibility as enduring values instilled during their schooling. These values were reinforced through teacher guidance, assemblies, moral instruction, and service opportunities.

#### Participant statements:

- “My teachers taught us to respect everyone, and I still consider respect very important in my life.”
- “Honesty was repeatedly emphasized in school and I continue to follow it in my personal and professional life.”
- “Compassion was encouraged through service activities, and I still practice it today.”

- “Integrity was a value we lived daily in school, and it guides me in my career.”
- “Responsibility was instilled in us, and it continues to shape my decisions.”

These voices confirm that Catholic schooling emphasized moral formation, consistent with Groome (1998) and Grace (2002), who argue that Catholic education is deeply tied to the cultivation of values that extend beyond the classroom into lifelong practice.

### **Objective 3: Aspects of Catholic school education contributing to personal growth**

Alumni attributed their growth to teacher influence, supportive school environment, curriculum, co-curricular activities, and discipline. Teachers were often remembered as role models who encouraged perseverance and self-belief, while co-curricular activities provided opportunities for teamwork and confidence building.

#### **Participant statements:**

- “There was a teacher who always encouraged me to do better and believe in myself.”
- “Sports and cultural activities gave me confidence and taught me cooperation.”
- “The school environment was supportive and helped me grow as a person.”
- “Curriculum experiences challenged me to think critically and responsibly.”
- “Discipline in school routines helped me develop self-control.”

These reflections highlight the holistic nature of Catholic schooling, where academic, moral, social, and personal formation are integrated. As Bryk et al. (1993) note, such experiences foster not only intellectual growth but also the development of responsible and confident individuals.

### **Objective 4: Continuity of lifelong values in alumni’s adult life**

Alumni emphasized that values acquired in Catholic schools continued to shape their relationships, professional conduct, decision-making, and social responsibility. The enduring influence of respect, honesty, and responsibility demonstrates the long-term impact of Catholic education.

#### **Participant statements:**

- “The values I learned in school still influence the way I treat people.”
- “The discipline and honesty taught in school continue to guide me in decisions at work.”
- “Respect for others has shaped my personal relationships.”
- “Responsibility learned in school influences how I manage my family and career.”
- “Integrity continues to guide my professional conduct.”

These replies illustrate that Catholic schooling provided enduring moral orientations, consistent with Greeley & Rossi (1966), who argue that schooling can contribute to dispositions that remain influential long after graduation.

## 6. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the contribution of Catholic school education can be understood as a **developmental process** that begins with school experiences, extends into personal growth, and continues through the application of values in adult life. Alumni perspectives provide unique retrospective insights, showing how Catholic schooling shaped their confidence, discipline, and maturity, while also instilling enduring values such as respect, honesty, compassion, and responsibility.

**Personal growth outcomes** were evident in alumni reflections on confidence, independence, and emotional maturity. Statements such as *“The teachers encouraged me to participate in activities, and that helped me become more confident”* and *“Peer interaction taught me cooperation and emotional maturity”* highlight how classroom participation, teacher encouragement, and peer relationships contributed to holistic development. This aligns with Bryk et al. (1993) and Grace (2002), who emphasize the importance of supportive school environments in fostering broader personal capacities.

**Value formation** was another significant outcome. Alumni consistently identified respect, honesty, and integrity as values that were reinforced through teachers, assemblies, and service opportunities. For example, one participant stated, *“Honesty was repeatedly emphasized in school and I continue to follow it in my personal and professional life.”* These findings confirm Groome’s (1998) view that Catholic education emphasizes moral formation and the cultivation of values that extend beyond the classroom.

**Educational experiences** such as teacher influence, curriculum, and co-curricular activities were identified as mechanisms through which growth occurred. Alumni recalled teachers who served as role models and activities that built confidence and cooperation. This reflects the holistic nature of Catholic schooling described by Grace (2002), where academic, moral, social, and personal formation are integrated.

Finally, the **continuity of values into adult life** demonstrates the lasting impact of Catholic schooling. Alumni reported that values learned in school guided their relationships, professional conduct, and decision-making. Statements such as *“The discipline and honesty taught in school continue to guide me in decisions at work”* illustrate how Catholic education provided enduring moral orientations. This supports Greeley & Rossi (1966), who argue that schooling contributes to dispositions that remain influential long after graduation.

Overall, the study confirms that Catholic education involves the **formation of the whole person**, not merely the transmission of academic knowledge. Alumni perspectives are particularly valuable because they provide retrospective insights that current students cannot offer, having experienced higher education, employment, and adult responsibilities. The

findings extend previous scholarship by focusing specifically on alumni perceptions of personal growth and lifelong values within the context of Cathedral Senior Secondary School, Lucknow.

## 7. Conclusion

The proposed study seeks to understand the lasting contribution of Catholic school education to the voice of its alumni. Rather than examining educational outcomes only in terms of academic achievements the study focuses on two important dimensions of education that is personal growth and lifelong values.

The study may contribute to a broader understanding of Catholic education by demonstrating how former students perceive the relationship between their schooling and the individuals subsequently became. It may also provide useful insights for educators seeking to strengthen educational practices that support personal development and lasting value formation.

Importantly, the final empirical finding was developed the alumina interview transcripts. Participants quotations and claims about the frequency and strengths of particular themes was included after the interview data has been systematically analysed.

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