



Autonomous Institutions: Strategies to Implement 5Cs of Pedagogical Professional Development in the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education

Dr. J. Uma Maheshwari ¹

¹ Asst. Prof of English, Head, Department of English, Government Degree College (A), Siddipet, Telangana, India.

Article Info

Article History:

Published: 17 June 2026

Publication Issue:

Volume 3, Issue 6
June-2026

Page Number:

200-203

Corresponding Author:

Dr. J. Uma Maheshwari

Abstract:

This paper examines the implementation of the 5Cs of pedagogy—Clarity, Curiosity, Connection, Collaboration, Creativity—in autonomous higher education institutions (HEIs), and the strategies required to address prevailing challenges, through the lens of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education. Autonomous HEIs currently face persistent faculty shortages, capacity-building gaps, and resistance to pedagogical reforms, impeding student-centric, technology-oriented teaching. Pedagogical Professional Development (PD), a continuous, collaborative process of skill-based training, emerges as a strategic solution. Although the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 does not list the 5Cs as a formal heading, its vision embodies each. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education, which emphasizes physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual growth, aligns closely with the 5Cs and offers tools for holistic development. Since Aurobindo views the teacher as a guide and facilitator, and advocates "free and natural growth," education must be clear, nurture curiosity, connect learners to their context through interdisciplinarity, foster collaboration, and encourage creativity. Autonomous institutions must integrate these principles while designing programs, curricula, and syllabi to ensure holistic student development.

Keywords: pedagogy, NEP 2020, pedagogical professional development, 5Cs, integral education, human mind

1. Introduction

National Education is not a revival of past forms or a rejection of modern knowledge. Its essence is to take foundation on India's own being, mind, and spirit. It is an initiation of the centuries to come, a break forward from an artificial present to the nation's greater innate potentialities.

- Sri Aurobindo

Challenges in Autonomous Higher Education Institutions

Autonomous institutions are navigating through faculty shortages, capacity-building gaps, and resistance to pedagogical reforms. These impede adoption of updated, student-centric, technology-oriented methods. Faculty shortages increase workload and reliance on ad-hoc staff, affecting quality. A 'mission mode' recruitment, as adopted by central universities, may address this problem. Capacity gaps arise when recruitment prioritizes subject knowledge over pedagogical skills, leading to teacher-centric lectures and limited use of ICT. Lack of peer-learning and continuous professional development further hinders progress of teaching learning process. Fear of increased workload also causes resistance to

flipped classrooms. A prominent digital divide between urban and rural institutions remains a major stumbling block in the system.

2. Pedagogical Professional Development and the 5Cs

Continuous PD improves teaching and learning outcomes through content-focused, skill-based training such as: mentorships, peer coaching, digital tool integration workshops, subject-specific pedagogy, and action research to address diverse needs of the students as well as society as Joshi (2013) noted, “the role of the teacher is to aid the student in uncovering the inner will to grow and to progress” (p. 53). The 5Cs—**Clarity, Curiosity, Connection, Collaboration, Creativity**—underpin this pedagogy, leading to integrative, inquiry-based, constructivist, collaborative, and reflective methods. The ‘5 Cs’ as a formal heading are not listed in the NEP 2020, but its vision clearly states each one. Autonomous colleges under NEP 2020 are encouraged to embed the 5 Cs—clarity, curiosity, connection, collaboration, creativity—by leveraging their academic freedom. At present, providing education that truly meets the evolving needs of students and industries, especially the development of essential 21st-century people skills like the 5Cs is the greatest challenge before all the autonomous colleges. The 5Cs reflected in NEP 2020’s vision are:

Clarity: It is seen in transparent curricula, Choice Based Credit Systems, and the shift to conceptual and competency-based learning.

Curiosity: It is promoted through inquiry and discovery projects and classroom discussions that encourage joyful learning.

Connection: It emphasizes linking knowledge to real life contexts, local culture, and interdisciplinary learning such as arts and sports integration.

Collaboration: It is highlighted by team-based projects, peer assessment, and co-curricular clubs that align industry-institute partnerships.

Creativity: It is a core skill, with policy calling for creative thinking, arts integration, design thinking, and innovative teaching practices.

Implementation Challenges for 5Cs in Autonomous Colleges:

Implementation of these 5Cs in Autonomous colleges is a challenging one as the clarity suffers without standardized guidelines, the curiosity is hampered by undertrained faculty, the connection is difficult due to limited industry or community partnerships, the conservative mindsets resist collaboration, and the creativity is constrained by poor funding for labs and innovation spaces. In addition to this, the affiliating universities often delay approvals, restrict syllabus changes, and impose high fees, undermining autonomy. As M.P. Pandit (2013) stated, institutions experimenting with new methods “must be encouraged and helped to function autonomously without administrative interference” (p. 18). The collaborative efforts from government bodies, universities, colleges, and regulatory agencies can only foster the full benefits of autonomy in academic excellence as well as in innovative teaching. These challenges prevent autonomous colleges from fully realizing their true

potential to drive innovation. The research for successful implementation of the 5Cs in the autonomous colleges led to Sri Aurobindo's integral education which in turn led to some interesting and pragmatic approaches.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education as a Framework.

Integral Education emphasizes holistic development focusing on physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual aspects in an individual. This system of education helps the child to develop each and every aspect of his being and awakes the latent possibilities of his personality to achieve

- a strong, supple, healthy, and beautiful physical body,
- an emotionally refined, sensitive, vitally energetic personality,
- a mind of clarity and critical thinking, inner silence and self-awareness and
- a psychic power of inner guidance and intuition to harmonize individuals' inner and outer worlds, and
- a spiritual aspect of cultivating a deeper connection with one's inner self and the universe.

In a nut shell it seeks a strong body, refined emotions, clarity of mind, inner guidance, and spiritual connection. The aim is to help the child develop "intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life... out of his own temperament" (Sri Aurobindo, as cited in Joshi, 2013). Sri Aurobindo asserted that education must study the human mind. The teacher is a guide and facilitator; the student must have freedom of choice "in accordance with his own nature". As the 'free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development' the system of education is called the free-progress system where knowledge is not imparted but presented to the students in the form of opportunities and material to stimulate their inner being for recognising their inner potential and knowledge. The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE), Puducherry, exemplifies this with no exams, a 1:13 teacher-student ratio, and integrated academics, arts, and physical education. Furthermore, it embodies *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, as an international center of education it encourages the medium of instruction for primary education is mother tongue and offers all the national and international languages to the students.

3. Findings: Translating 5Cs into Practice via Integral Education

There is an interesting alignment between the 5Cs and Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of integral education and very amicable solutions for all these problems and challenges can be drawn, because as mentioned integral education aims at all round development of the student.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the new aim of education must 'help the child to develop his intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life and impulses out of his own temperament and being' which include all the 5Cs that can be used as tools to facilitate this holistic approach because they are the part and parcel of integral education. According to Integral Education, 'life has a divine purpose and one of the most important tasks of

education is to lead the student to discover for himself the aim of life and the specific role that he himself has to play in it’.

Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE), Puducherry as an exemplary autonomous body can guide all the autonomous institutions in translating 5Cs into practice in the light of Integral Education. Clarity can be achieved through stakeholder- inclusive curriculum design and self-directed learning with clear goals. Curiosity is inculcated by training faculty in inquiry methods and providing resources for exploration. Connection requires interdisciplinary projects, real-world case studies, and internships.

Collaboration is fostered through group tasks, interdisciplinary centers, and community engagement, reflecting the “collective aspect” of education (Pavitra, 2013, p. 39). Creativity is promoted via design thinking labs, arts-integrated courses, and meditation or mindfulness for inner expression. For example, if a project on ‘communication techniques in digital activism’ is given to students, and done in an organized manner will definitely illustrates all 5Cs: clarity of the concept of the project, curiosity about the techniques to be implemented, it’s connection to social change, collaboration across users of digital technology, and creativity in execution of the project.

4. Conclusion

Hence, the pedagogical reforms in autonomous institutions must be clear, nurture curiosity, connect learners to their surroundings, foster collaboration, and encourage creativity—principles central to Integral Education. True autonomy and adequate resources can make HEIs real centers of holistic learning. Programs like *Rupantar* in schools by Sri Aurobindo Society may also guide HEIs toward student-centered, inclusive education.

The past is our foundation, the present is our material, and the future is our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education.

- Sri Aurobindo.

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