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BRIDGING SCIENCE & SOUL

**Dr Sangeeta
Bhatia**

Principal
KIIT World School, Delhi



With a background in Chemistry and a doctorate in Bio-Inorganic Chemistry, **Dr Sangeeta Bhatia** made a deliberate shift from academic research to school education in 1986. Now, the Principal of KIIT World School, Delhi, and a National Award-winning educator, Dr Bhatia shares her thoughts on leadership, learning and K-12 system.

 Gabbeta Ranjith Kumar

Q: Your academic background is in Chemistry and Bio-Inorganic Chemistry. What inspired your transition to school education?

My academic journey began with a Master's and Honours degree from Miranda House,

Delhi, followed by a doctorate in Bio-Inorganic Chemistry from Delhi University. I also qualified UGC NET and was awarded a fellowship. During my doctoral studies, while mentoring students at Delhi University, I discovered something more powerful than research—the joy of

shaping young minds. This experience inspired me to transition to school education in 1986. While science reveals the wonders of the world, education builds the wonder within each child. This shift was not a diversion, but a deeper calling.

Q: How has your research background influenced your teaching and leadership?

Research instilled in me patience, precision, and persistence—qualities I brought into education. At KIIT World School, I led initiatives like Project Darwin, an action research-based approach to enhance teacher competencies aligned with NEP 2020. Like a good experiment, a good school thrives on observation, reflection, and continuous improvement. My leadership has always been evidence-driven, empathetic, and focused on asking, "What can we do better tomorrow?"

Q: KIIT World School is known for its holistic learning. What are some key initiatives you've led?

We strive to make learning effective and joyful. Our 'Jaadui Grid' integrates interdisciplinary learning where subjects like science and social studies merge with dance, drama, and debates, creating meaningful connections. The Almanac-based Reflective Journaling helps students internalise learning and

develop emotional intelligence. Through Project NIRMAAN, students mentor peers in theatre, STEM, and public speaking. Our Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning captures and celebrates best teaching practices. These initiatives nurture learners who are academically sound, self-aware, and socially grounded.

Q: What major shifts have you seen in K-12 education, and how has KIIT adapted?

The shift has been from content-heavy instruction to concept-driven exploration. Education has moved from memorisation to meaning. KIIT embraced this by implementing competency-based assessments, promoting student agency, and introducing AI-augmented classrooms. During the pandemic, we focused not only on digital delivery but also emotional continuity via regular student check-ins and wellness sessions. We aim to nurture thinking individuals, not just teach subjects.

Q: As a policy influencer, what reforms do you believe are essential in India's K-12 system?

Teacher autonomy, curriculum flexibility, and reduced assessment stress must be prioritised. The system should encourage creativity over compliance. As a CBSE Master Trainer and former member of the CBSE Governing Body, I advocate for teacher training that addresses learner diversity and inclusive pedagogy. Mental health must be a structured policy component, not an afterthought.



Our Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning captures and celebrates best teaching practices. These initiatives nurture learners who are academically sound, self-aware, and socially grounded

Q: As a CBSE Master Trainer, what do you focus on while training teachers?

I help teachers rediscover the joy of teaching. I train them in competency-based education, experiential learning, and socio-emotional engagement. Capacity building in classroom innovation—through design thinking, storytelling, and meaningful technology integration—is key. Each workshop is rooted in reflection and action, ensuring theory translates into practice.

Q: What decisions did you help shape as part of the CBSE Governing Body?

I contributed to guidelines on school safety norms, teacher competency mapping, and alternative assessments. We laid the groundwork aligned with NEP 2020, including Holistic Progress Cards and flexible learning pathways. Our goal was to make schools safer, fairer, and more empowering for all.

Q: How do you help teachers blend tech with real engagement?

We believe technology is a tool to help teachers realise their full potential. Every classroom has interactive boards offering countless opportunities to bring the world inside. We share links that take a child's imagination beyond classroom walls. Students' work is displayed on class walls to enable further exploration and real-life application. Technology supports learning, but the teacher remains central.

Q: How does KIIT promote mental and emotional well-being among students?

Well-being is embedded in our culture. We run

a Peer Educators Programme, appoint a Happiness Coordinator, and conduct Social Emotional Learning workshops. I personally host “Principal Speaks from the Heart”—monthly sessions where students freely share, suggest, or simply be heard. Our circle-time model and peer support structures ensure no child feels alone.

Q: How do you nurture curiosity and creativity beyond academics?

We provide platforms beyond the classroom. Our ATL Lab uses an Idea Factory where students post sticky notes with their ideas. Students share their own understanding of learning in formats close to their hearts. Everyday assemblies offer outlets for creative expression. KIIT Got Talent is an annual event where surprising talents are discovered and celebrated. These avenues encourage creativity and curiosity.

Q: What achievement are you personally most proud of?

Having been nurtured in a government school myself, I have always prioritised including young boys and girls from such backgrounds in innovative experiments to ensure equity and opportunity.

Q: How did receiving the National Award to Teachers in 2008 shape your journey?

It was an honour and a moment of reflection. I felt the responsibility to represent all teachers who work silently every day. The award gave me a national platform to promote innovative pedagogy and teacher development, amplifying teacher voices beyond personal achievement.

When students with gaps in expected learning outcomes spend quality time with me for a few weeks and I see a radical shift in their performance, I feel my presence is truly worthwhile. That feeling moves me beyond words.

Q: How should education evolve with the rise of AI and automation?

We must prepare children for what machines cannot do—empathy, ethical reasoning, and innovation. At KIIT, we have introduced AI literacy alongside philosophy circles, service learning, and design labs. The future belongs to those who are human at heart and agile in thought.

Q: What advice do you have for aspiring educators?



I champion reflection over results, growth over grades, and humanness over hierarchy. I wish to be remembered not by awards, but by the lives I've helped shape

Teach with your heart, not just your head. Be open to learning every day. Celebrate small wins—the shy child who speaks up, the average student who asks a brilliant question. That is your true legacy. Don't just be a teacher; be a nurturer of potential.

Q: What legacy do you hope to leave behind?

I hope to have created a space where students feel seen and teachers feel empowered. I champion reflection over results, growth over grades, and humanness over hierarchy. I wish to be remembered not by awards, but by the lives I've helped shape.

Dr Sangeeta Bhatia's journey exemplifies the transformative power of empathy-driven leadership in education. From chemistry labs to classrooms, she has continually sought to empower students and teachers alike with a vision rooted in innovation, inclusivity, and inner growth. Her legacy is not just in the reforms she has influenced or awards she has received, but in the countless lives she has uplifted through compassion, creativity, and conviction. **OF**