

Improving School Management Learning from Successful Schools

As intimated to our readers in the previous issue of the newsletter, the next ANTRIEP seminar will be held at the SEAMO-INNOTECH, Manila, The Philippines from 6-8 July 2004. As in the past, the seminar will be followed by the Network Meeting on the next day (9 July, 2004). The theme chosen for this year's seminar is "**Improving School Management: Learning from Successful Schools**."

We are delighted to inform all the readers that the Case Study of Successful Schools initiated as a part of second phase of the collaborative research project of the ANTRIEP on "Improving School Management in Asian Countries" has been carried out by our member institutions. The case studies and their findings will be important inputs to the seminar and will be presented at the seminar.

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We have received an overwhelming response to the seminar from our member institutions, national governments, international and bilateral agencies and many individual experts. In addition to member institutions, people from Vietnam, Cambodia, Bhutan and Maldives will also be participating in the seminar. We hope that this, like the previous seminars, will be an important event in further strengthening the network activities. The precedent experience has shown that the Network seminars provide an excellent opportunity for extending and establishing linkages with agencies and institutions beyond the member institutions.

As announced, the theme for this issue of the newsletter is: "Improving School Management: Learning from Successful Schools". We had requested the member institutions to contribute articles based on the school case studies conducted as a part of ANTRIEP research project. The responses have been positive and prompt. We have received articles from IED-AKU (Pakistan), NCERT (India) and BRAC (Bangladesh).

The paper from IED-AKU presents the effective leadership and management in improving a school located in a small town in Northern region of Pakistan. Qualitative method was adopted to study different aspects of school management. The case illustrates that culmination of several interventions and strategies led the school distinction of success. The efforts to improve the school started with improvising the physical environment with first refurbishing existing facilities followed by mobilising community resources to set up new facilities. Serious attention has been paid to students' personality development, pedagogical leadership through staff development along with instructional innovations. Equal importance was accorded to improve inter-personal relationships and

communication among teachers and with parents and the community. Creation of team spirit, involving stakeholders including teachers, parents and students and SMC in decision-making and having positive relation with administration has helped the school to move towards success. The case study corroborates that the key role was played by the head teacher to direct the school towards success by strategic planning and management.

The second case study depicts the successful management practices adopted in residential secondary schools called Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) catering to rural talented students in India. The JNVs adopted innovative strategies in planning and managing the school activities. Treating students as individuals, frequent student assessment, providing feedback, arranging remedial teaching and supervisory studies cemented effective learning. Undoubtedly, in these schools, the teachers are the main contributors to achieve academic excellence, as the residential schools demand devotion and commitment from teachers. Participatory management system, harmonious relationships, setting higher targets and availability of essential physical facilities characterize successful school in JNV context.

The third case study presents success story about a small government school located in rural set-up in Bangladesh. The head teacher has elevated this school to the present level with persistent efforts in the last few years. The success of the school is mainly due to efficiency and commitment of head of the school, participation of teachers and SMC in planning and implementation of school annual plan, introducing innovations, including income generating activities. Additional attributes for success of this school include strong community support, head teacher's credibility among teachers and administration and professional training he had in school management.

Though all the case studies divulge some common factors that can be credited for the success of the schools, however, it might be difficult to generate a single model of success. As many of the adopted management devices

are of contextual and individual style than the universal, some of the management practices adopted in large schools may not necessarily dole out the purpose for a small school. For any school, the success depends on culmination of diverse factors. It is difficult to delineate the single factor for success, rather what is evident is that capability of school head to create positive environment, develop internal autonomy to manage the school in the given broad framework of the system through establishing trust and responsibility among teachers, recognising the students as individuals, harnessing support of parents and community are crucial to make a school successful. Hope, the case studies included in this Newsletter will be of interest and would be found to be useful to understand the dynamics of successful schools in different contexts.

We continue to receive encouraging responses to the Newsletter from various individuals and institutions. We express our gratitude to the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter and to all the readers for their encouragement.

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The next ANTRIEP International Seminar on **Improving School Management: Learning from Successful Schools** will be held at the South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, Regional Center for Educational Innovations and Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH), Diliman, Quezon City, The Philippines from July 6-8, 2004.

Successful School Management: Case Study of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas in India

Introduction

The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, has established a residential co-educational school, called Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), one in each district to provide quality secondary education (Grades 6 to 12) to rural talented children. The admission to these schools is made through an all India test. All expenditure, including learning materials, board and lodging, is met by the Government of India. The JNVs are also expected to be pace setting institutions in the district.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the strategies and processes employed in the management of successful schools in the Indian context. Three successful Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) located in different parts of India were selected for in-depth case studies. The sample schools were selected on the basis of two criteria: (a) Pass Percentage Index that consisted of percentage of students passing out of the school in Grades 10 and 12 of national examinations during the last three years (2001, 2002, and 2003), and (b) Co-curricular Index, or the participation of students in sports and games, literary and cultural activities, and community based activities at the state and national levels. The weighted performance scores of all JNVs were rank ordered. The Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas located at Kolhapur (State of Maharashtra) and Ernakulam (State of Kerala) ranked first and second on the weighted performance score. The third school, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya at Gadchiroli (State of Maharashtra) ranked first among all JNVs located in the tribal areas. The Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas were included in the study for three reasons: (a) the JNVs are residential schools fully funded by the Government of India; (b) the JNVs primarily cater to the rural talented children; and (c) admission to JNVs is made on the basis of an all India selection test.

The study attempted to examine some of the aspects like planning and management of various resources by the principal, communication between various actors,

teachers' involvement in the management of the school, and autonomy granted to various actors in their functioning.

The principal's role in the effective management of the Vidyalayas has been found as the most important aspect for the success of these schools. The three principals included in the research have created a congenial atmosphere conducive for enriching relationship among the various stakeholders in the schools— the teachers, students, the parents and the higher officials of the NVS. They have been accepted as part of the team, and the teachers and students felt that they are supportive and encourage them to achieve greater heights in terms of academic achievement and in carrying out other co-curricular activities.

Participative and Democratic Management

In all the three case studies it was amply evident that participative management system has been adopted. The schools have constituted different committees to look after different curricular and co-curricular activities and management of hostels. The committees primarily consist of teachers, and in some cases even the students are involved. Another important feature was that the principals provided autonomy to the committee members to perform the delegated tasks, and also made them accountable for successful completion of the tasks assigned. The principal of one of the schools keeps himself abreast with the developments by regularly enquiring and discussing with the concerned persons. He believes in quick implementation of the decisions. The principal of another school would sometimes join the committees and offer his suggestions. Another principal trusts his colleagues that they "can do". The regular monitoring by the principals kept people on their toes.

It can be concluded from the case studies that the successful schools follow democratic ways of taking decisions. For this purpose, staff meetings, meetings of the subject committees and other committees were held regularly. Since students and teachers were involved in the committees, a feeling of ownership developed in them regarding the decisions taken and tasks performed. The

students themselves, under the supervision of the teachers were managing many of the activities, such as hostels, morning assembly, purchase of food items for the mess, cultural activities, etc. Thus, the students were trained to perform leadership functions. The moral development of students was also equally emphasised. The students were provided opportunities to serve their fellow beings, share their resources with others in the community, as well as develop values such as equality, punctuality, sense of responsibility, learning to live together, etc.

Goal of Academic Excellence

In all the three schools, there was stress on attainment of success and reaching higher and higher goals. The principal of one of the schools kept repeating that 'sky is the limit'. Another principal set higher targets every year for students and teachers. The principal believed in the principle of *'Think big, think fast, and think ahead'*. He further believed that if one plans for something higher, at least one will be able to achieve some portion of it. Another principal wants to go ahead in his own personal life as well as in every activity of the school. For this he strives to create a competitive atmosphere in the school by giving examples of the students and teachers who have attained success. The three schools made elaborate attempts to achieve the targets set by them by putting extended hours of teaching and learning in the form of remedial/supervised study, closely monitoring the progress of weak students, and so forth.

There has been overemphasis on achieving academic excellence in the three schools. It is partly due to the fact that this is the yardstick employed by the NVS as well as the society to judge the success of a school. However, within the constraints, attempts were made towards overall development of personality of the students. The students were not only encouraged to take part in different games, debates and quizzes, elocution, cultural activities, etc, but also were awarded for their performance at the state and national levels in these activities.

Devotion and Commitment of Teachers

The teachers are, undoubtedly, the most important contributors towards the success of these schools. Being residential in nature, the schools demand devotion and commitment from teachers who could spend their time of the day with the students. Teachers remained with the students starting from morning physical training to the late night study time. Though this was the routine

followed in every residential school, like the JNVs, the devotion and commitment of the teachers was commendable in sample schools. One positive factor found in the teachers was that they have accepted that they needed to work with full involvement in the JNVs. Working in a JNV is not like working in any other school as they remain accountable for the performance of the students. These teachers have learnt to sacrifice many of their personal interests.

Though the schools have prescribed guidelines for running the day-to-day activities and overall management, the schools follow their own typical routine for the day suiting to the local situations. The timing of the classroom teaching, evening games and other routines were planned based on the local needs. The principals along with the teachers planned and implemented major activities and programs, including the effective day-to-day functioning of the schools.

The personality of the principals was well reflected in the ways they interacted with the teachers, students and others in the school. One of the principals has never missed an opportunity to appreciate the good work, and at the same time made people accountable for their work. When someone approached him with a problem, he did not provide him/her a solution, rather suggested alternatives. This forced the person to apply his/her mind and remain responsible for his/her actions. Whereas another principal attempted to create a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning, to develop a sense of responsibility among people, create competitive atmosphere among teachers and students, and claimed that he did not interfere in teachers' work. Another principal included in the study believed in treating all teachers and students equal, set higher and higher targets, adopted a non-interfering approach, and ensured that students' interest was protected at any cost.

Forging Harmonious Relationship

The second research question in the study was related to the management of specific relations between and amongst various actors in successful JNVs. It also aimed at examining the system of reward and punishment in the schools. It can be said that the supporting and personalised nature of relationship between the principal and teachers, among the teachers, and between the teachers and the students served as the base for the success of these schools. The NVS system itself, through its various orientations and circulars and notifications, prepared teachers to work as a team. The relationship

between the principal and the teacher, as observed, was supportive, congenial, encouraging and mutually respecting in the sample schools. The principals believed that it was the teachers who were actually running the schools. Without them the schools would not have attained success. Though the principals maintained an encouraging and supportive relationship with the teachers, they kept reminding the teachers of their responsibilities and even went to the extent of taking administrative actions when situation had become out of control (as was evident in case one of the sampled schools). The principal of another school maintained a partially friendly and partially inspiring relations with the teachers. Taking leave is a big problem in all JNVs. Even a teacher in one of the schools had to postpone his marriage because the earlier principal refused to grant him leave. The principal of one of the sample schools has been liberal in granting leave to teachers as per their need. A teacher in another school could not avail his paternity leave because of pressure of work. The principal was now looking for an opportunity to grant him paternity leave. The teachers, in turn, were also well aware of the fact that they were accountable for the work assigned to them.

The relationship among the teachers was another reason for the success of these schools. There existed good rapport, supportive and encouraging relationship among the teachers in all the three sampled schools. They tried and shared their responsibilities, when needed. This developed a feeling of collegiality among them. Most of the teachers consulted their colleagues in academic and other matters. The relationship among the teachers was governed by the welfare of the students. The mutual consultations by teachers in academic problems and problems related to students led to smooth functioning of the schools. This reduced the burden of the principal and also resulted in enriching the student-teacher relationship. The example of English language teachers in one of the schools working together to improve the language skills of the students in English could be cited as a model for teamwork to academically support the students.

The principals in the sampled schools gave top priority to the welfare of the students. The first thing the principal in one of the schools did soon after his joining the school was to bring improvement in the quality of food and the way food was served to them in the dining hall. Similar improvements were also noticed in respect of another school where the principal even went to the extent of not allowing a newly recruited teacher by the NVS to join the

school as he felt that he would not be able to meet the expectations of the students. He said that "*Because of someone I cannot allow my students to suffer*".

The student-teacher relationship has been another important factor influencing the success of these schools. The relationship in all the three schools was that of guiding, friendly, encouraging, supportive and also sometimes controlling. No compromise was made in all the three schools so far as punctuality and achieving excellence in academic and other co-curricular activities were concerned. While the teachers gave personal care and attention to students and attempted to solve their personal problems, students also sometimes created situations where teachers felt that the students wanted them. The students respected even the strict teacher from the core of the hearts. The story of a lady teacher in one of the sample schools who, though considered very strict in the school, had to cancel her transfer to another school of her choice nearer to her native place because of the emotions expressed by the students. The students in the other school hailed the teachers as their parents who gave care and support to them. In the third school, while the students accepted and recognized that their teachers strive for their welfare and progress, yet some students voiced that some teachers didn't treat them in a fair manner. However, this had something to do with the adolescents' problems.

A special mention needs to be made about the student-student relationship in the sampled schools. The relationship was brotherly/sisterly. It presented an excellent example of national integration where students of different castes and gender lived together as a family, popularly called as "Navodaya family". It may be added that this relationship was not an imposed one by the principals or the teachers; rather the students themselves had imbibed it.

Parents Role

The role of parents in running of JNVs has been limited. They were represented in SMC, PTA, and PTC. One of the sampled schools mailed the progress of their wards every month, the other two schools organised PTA meetings every month. These meetings are attended by 60 to 80 per cent of the parents. The results of the unit tests and other tests were displayed on the notice board for perusal of the parents. The parents also visited the concerned teacher and discussed the progress of their wards.

Recognition to performing teachers was a very important component in the schools under study. The performance of teachers was recognised at different levels: appreciation letters by the principal of the school, Chairman of Vidyalaya Management Committee (VMC), Deputy Director of the region, and Commissioner of NVS, as well as various awards introduced by NVS. These appreciation letters and awards generated a kind of competitive spirit among the teachers, which motivated them to put their best. The teachers receiving these awards is both matter of pride (one among us has received the award) and jealousy (if he/she can get it, why can't I?) for the remaining teachers. The non-performing teachers remain under threat of being punished in different ways.

Innovative Teaching-Learning

The third research question was concerned with the teaching-learning process in successful schools. It was evident from the case studies that the sampled schools have introduced a number of innovations in the teaching-learning process. The practice of cooperative learning and conduct of slip tests was followed in one of the schools. Peer teaching and organisation of Monday tests were the key features of another school. In the third school, the practice of cooperative learning and teaching and test methodology, were adopted. The regular supervision of the classroom teaching by the principal was an important component in these schools. The principal of one of the schools has developed an Observation Record where he gave detailed feedback to the teachers about their teaching methods. The teachers in another school would daily submit a statement

showing the teaching profile of the day to the principal, which helped him monitoring the pace with which a particular lesson was being taught to the students. In all the three schools, the principals maintained records of the continuous and comprehensive evaluations in respect of each student, which helped them to monitor their progress and devise suitable remedial programs.

The last research question was related to the support provided to successful schools. Since JNVs were fully funded by the Government of India, these schools did not face any financial problem in running of the school. The NVS, through its headquarters at New Delhi and regional offices, provided all necessary support to these schools. At the district level, the District Collector remained the Chairman of the Vidyalaya Management Committee, which helped the school in sorting out local level problems.

In sum, it can be said that the successful school management in the context of Navodaya Vidyalayas is characterised by participative management system, harmonious relationship with and among the teachers, encouraging students to achieve higher and higher, imposing trust in them, use of innovative methods in teaching-learning process, development of values in students, and regular supervision of the various activities of the school..

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Role of Management and Leadership in Creating a Successful School in Pakistan

Introduction

The management of school education in Pakistan is undergoing significant change with the advent of decentralisation in recent years (Government of Pakistan, 2001a.). In the context of a current three-year action plan, quality improvement is to be achieved through the following plan:

Educational administration and management is devolved from the federal and provincial governments to the district governments. Much of the action concerning education is in the communities, tehsils and

districts. Most educational planning and decision-making will now take place where the action is. Centralised systems and distanced planning will be replaced by governance which is people and learner-centred (Government of Pakistan, 2001b.: p.1V).

At this stage, emphasis seems to be on community participation for empowerment and ensuring accountability. A devolved school management system has been introduced by making School Management Committees (SMCs) functional for seeking more community involvement. This should make schools more responsive to the local community and eliminate top-

down approaches to decision-making, thereby creating a broad base for decision-making to enhance community participation and accountability (Memon, 2003). Whilst it appears that such major reforms are taking place, there is no empirical research evidence on the effectiveness of the changes being made and it is evident that significant problems of quality remain in the school education system.

With that background, as a part of ANTRIEP research study on “successful school management”, a research project was undertaken to identify ‘successful schools’ in various school education systems in Pakistan and find out how and to what extent the management practices of those schools contributed to their success. The research was carried out in three schools and this article reports one of the case studies from the project. Two researchers spent four days in the school collecting data from three sources to write a case study:

- Interviews (audio tape-recorded and later transcribed).
- Observations (general observations around the school and focused observations in classrooms).
- Documents (where documents were made available, these were analysed for content relevant to the research).

The Mountain School

Profile of the School

Mountain School (fictitious name) is located in a rural town in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. The town has a population of 17,500 who are reasonably well off economically though some are poor. It is a diverse Muslim community and various languages are spoken, the main ones being Broshaski and Shina. The national language, Urdu, is spoken by most and English by a very few. Most of the adults in the community are illiterate and earn their living by farming and trading.

Mountain School is a girls’ school of the Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P). It was established in 1953 on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of His Highness, The Aga Khan III as a co-educational primary school up to Class 3 and it grew year by year until it was upgraded to middle level in 1973. In 1982 the present building was occupied and in 1989 it was established as a high school with a single stream of Arts. From 1992, significant improvements were made through the work of a former principal (now a Field Education Officer with AKES,P). A School Management Committee was formed for the first time and a Science Stream was introduced in

1994 in Class 9th and 10th. Some additional land was purchased and an examination hall and library were built. The school became very popular and enrolment grew to 720 around that time, which made the school overcrowded.

In 1995, it was changed to a girls only school to relieve the over-population and a separate AKES,P boys school was established. Additionally, at that time some other schools were established in the town which meant that some students moved to the new schools. For these reasons the number of students dropped quite considerably. In 2003, the school had classes from Nursery to Class 10; 21 teachers; and 408 students.

Substantial improvement has occurred in the physical conditions of the school over the past three years. A boundary wall has been constructed, grounds have been planted with grass (previously bare and dusty earth), and interiors have been painted and cleaned up. The Principal’s office has been extended and improved; the staff-room has been relocated and refurnished; and the examination hall has been made into a multi-purpose facility. Classrooms have been cleaned and moveable furniture has been installed to allow for group work. Classrooms are nicely decorated with charts and students’ works (also displayed in the Principal’s office). However, the library is not in good condition and there is no computer laboratory (at one point the school had hired 12 computers but they were unable to maintain payment of the fee so the computers were returned). Subject-wise textbooks have been provided, which forms the syllabus for teachers to follow. Not much other reading material is available due to lack of a proper library.

Three 35-minute periods were observed (2 Maths and 1 English). Time was efficiently used with classes starting and ending on time (a bell was rung to indicate this). In all the three classes, the teaching style was interactive and student-centred. Two of the classes were arranged in groups and used cooperative learning strategies. The third class was arranged in a U shape (no class was in typical school rows). The teachers were all friendly, polite and engaged students in a range of activities, including group work, making presentations in front of the class or writing on the board. Teachers were well planned, creative and they motivated students to participate in activities. They were all teaching for conceptual understanding, wherever possible. In all cases, it could be described as good teaching. Homework was set by all the teachers and there was constant checking of students’ learning with positive feedback in all cases.

School Management

The school has some autonomy in the area of financial management but not complete autonomy. The school has its own bank account and it is jointly operated by the School Management Committee (SMC) and the Principal. Recently, the SMC consulted with the government agencies and got about Rs.35,000; it is allowed in their TOR that they can generate some funds. Also community members were asked to help the school by donating in cash or kind. For example, some of the parents donated wood whereas well-off family members gave some cash.

The buildings and the grounds have been greatly improved in recent years as part of the overall school improvement project. This work has been undertaken by the SMC and it is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the buildings. Two people are employed by the SMC as school cleaners.

There is an in-charge head who assists with teacher management. Previously he was the head teacher of different schools so he has lots of experience. Preparing the timetable is an important aspect of teacher management and that is done in a teachers' workshop so that everybody may contribute to the decisions.

A number of aspects of daily management were mentioned by the Principal. For dealing with teacher absence, one of the teachers has the responsibility to arrange alternate teachers for those classes. This can be quite difficult when the school is already short of teachers. Dealing with parents consumes a lot of time and the Principal does this himself and likes to be available all the time. When he is not teaching, he likes to walk around the school and observe the teaching-learning processes.

Parents/Community Involvement in School Management

There are four formal mechanisms for parents and community involvement in the school:

- School Management Committee (SMC), also called by an earlier name, Village Education Committee (VEC).
- Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).
- Mothers' Mobilisation Committee.
- Women's Organisation of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP).

The most important of these is the SMC that is appointed

by, and represents the local community. There are 15 members (at present 11 males and 4 females), mostly parents of students from the school. The teachers from the school are not eligible for membership. Members are selected by the community on the basis of their role in community leadership. Usually monthly meetings of the SMC last one to two hours in the evening, though sometimes they can be up to three hours long. The agenda comprises matters, such as appointment of community-based teachers or maintenance of building. Sometimes AKES,P people ask for information and for that they are involved. If any funds are needed, the matter is discussed and the committee designs a programme, or if contact has to be made with any other NGO or government agency, then a team is selected for the task. There is a small team who take care of finance, even fee collection. If some of the students don't pay their fees, the committee gets a list and they contact their parents. If the parents are unable to pay, it has happened that some community member will help out by paying the fees.

The success of the school is attributed to the combined efforts of all participants working together. According to a parent, "The progress and development of the school is done by the efforts, activeness and understanding of all the people together. The VEC, school management and the community are all doing hard work and give their active participation that's why the school is improving. We (VEC) are also successful in motivating the community people and parents, so this all makes it a good school. And it is hoped it will develop further day-by-day like other schools such as the Aga Khan Academy and Higher Secondary School".

The Principal

The Principal is highly motivated and satisfied with his job. Besides his good academic and professional qualifications, he also has excellent background experience for this position. Earlier, he was working at the Professional Development Centre, Northern Areas (PDCN) as a Professional Development Teacher (PDT), where he had an opportunity to work in a number of different schools. A lot of his job satisfaction comes from helping students and teachers to learn and change.

When asked to name the most important role that he has in the school as the head teacher, the Principal responded: "That is the team building, that is to give respect to the teachers, to the people with whom you work. So sometimes I work as a team member and the teachers are

the leaders where we have delegated tasks. So there I am a team member and one of the teachers is the head of that committee, so they don't feel that I am the boss or I know everything. They feel comfortable working with me, that's why they are ready to share everything".

The Principal was asked what he thinks makes the school a 'successful school'? He identified teamwork and cohesion amongst the staff, building trust and quality relationships, shared decision-making, empowerment and positive community involvement in the school as some of the major factors. He emphasised that the school has adopted a slogan "We sink or swim together" as part of the school vision statement. This means there is a shared sense of responsibility and accountability for the school and that everyone is expected to be a part of the team.

He tries to involve some of the teachers in SMC meetings, so that they may know that the community people's responses and expectations in order that they may work for their benefit. Community involvement is very important and specially of the mothers. When he first came to the school, he found that the parents were invited only to be told of the student's weaknesses. Parents didn't feel comfortable and they were often victimised. In front of a school gathering they would be told that their child is not doing very well.

He felt that a change of strategy with parents was needed. He invited some 84 mothers to a meeting with him but only 6 took part. When he talked to them they said that they apprehended that the new head would be harsh with them and he would tell them that their child was not doing well. As such they would not be feeling comfortable. Instead of this, he asked them to share the problems that their children were facing at home and in school. Next he involved the SMC to invite the mothers. They made a list and took the responsibility to go to the people and invite them. They arranged a workshop for 60 mothers and everybody was involved. The workshop was for 3 hours and included group activities, discussions and presentations that were quite helpful and the mothers involvement was high.

The Principal was asked what the school was like when he first took up the appointment and how it has changed. First, he mentioned the environment: "The physical environment was not that much safe and that much appropriate; even there were different kinds of vehicles used to cross this area and animals could be seen in the school premises". Second, he referred to the teachers' attitude to students. He said "Most of the teachers

strongly believed in harsh, physical punishment and there was a definition of discipline, such as if there is pin-drop silence in the classroom it means it is a well disciplined classroom. We had some sessions of professional development where we discussed the issue and we tried to modify that definition". In the classroom "if a teacher says just sit down, the student would have to sit. They did not even ask if a student had any mistake and if they just would stand up and ask question, they were not appreciated".

Third, he mentioned the staff-room and staff-room culture, "That was also very much strange like the things which were displayed in the staff-room; these were vividly showing an environment where teachers were not very careful about things, such as the bookshelves on the back side. There were books inside but they were full of dust and everything was just jumbled up. Now fortunately you can't see that sort of thing here because at IED we had an opportunity to visit some of the schools to observe and to write a paper on school culture. That was quite helpful for me to look at school culture and specially the classroom culture. That sort of thing we shared with the teacher and there has been a change. So a kind of balkanization was there, teachers were divided in their own groups".

Finally, he mentioned the aspirations of the students: "Students were not that much confident and I do remember when I asked the students 'how many of you want to go to university', they used to say 'we are not those people who can go to the university'. This sort of remark they had about themselves but now if you ask them, most of the students will raise their hands because encouragement has been given, the feeling has been given that you can also join universities. They have been told that universities are not for special people, you are the ones who can also go there. So this is what has been done".

The perspective of the teachers confirmed the point about school improvement. One teacher said: "Our physical environment has changed a lot. Initially we didn't have a boundary wall of the school that's why all the outsiders could pass through here. But now the boundary wall is constructed".

Another teacher commented: "When the new Principal joined the school, a number of people, as parents and as guardians began taking interest about their children. Before that, they were used to ignore their children. And the second step was, he went to different community

centres and met a number of community people. They were told of the situation, that work was happening in our school, that is why our results are good this year”.

This view of the school is also shared by the SMC: “Yeah, it is very good compared to the past. In the past there was no involvement of VEC and community people as such. But now as you all see that the community people, the school, the staff, VEC, even the students, everyone is so involved and they participate in progressing the school day-by-day everyone is giving his efforts, the school management, Head Teacher (HT), community people, VEC all the people are working hard. That’s why all the people are satisfied that the school will more develop day-by-day”.

The SMC was asked why is your school called a successful school? A member replied, “Our community people and the Head Teacher are very good. If we have any problem, we tell the community people and they give their cooperation to us. Our HT is also very hard working and nice, he works very hard day and night for the progress and betterment of the school. The VEC members are also contributing towards the betterment of the school. We also meet and discuss about the progress of the school, that’s why today the standard of the studies has also improved in the school. So these people contributed and made this school a successful school”.

Management of Pedagogical Processes

Pedagogical management, i.e. managing the quality of teaching and learning, is an important concern of the Principal. Prior to becoming the Principal, he had completed some courses at AKU-IED where pedagogical leadership had been raised. These included the MEd, VT and CEM programmes. He now believes that it is important for both students and teachers to have an environment conducive to learning and professional development. Whereas mostly teacher’s professional development was thought of as going away from the school to some special event, he now thinks that “the best training is in the classroom, when you are in the classroom and you are with the teacher, you can see a number of things. You can see positive things which they don’t realise and if we highlight those things they further strengthen it and if there is any area for improvement then we can collectively work on that, we can try to improve”.

He gave an example of some teachers having problems with classroom management skills. “They used to go

into the classroom and if there were any messy pieces of paper on the floor and sitting arrangement topsy turvy even then they would start their lessons. So we have had workshop sessions on classroom management and different sitting arrangements. When we now go to the classroom we try to take care that the environment is neat and clean with proper sitting arrangement. This is done practically by the teachers. So, as a teacher, I think that it is really important for me to take care of both teaching and learning, about the quality of teaching and the learning. So I think that is really important”.

The school is characterised by shared decision-making with teachers being involved as much as possible. They have monthly staff meetings and many other activities where teachers are involved. For example, during admissions teachers are part of the Admission Committee along with SMC members. They design and give the tests, conduct the interviews and approve new admissions. It is important that they are involved in the whole process. Also, in the appointment of new staff the teachers are asked what criteria should be used for selection.

Leadership and School Improvement

We noticed in the Principal’s office, a prominent display of the School Action Plan (equivalent to a School Development Plan). We asked the Principal to explain how the Action Plan was developed. He said “All the teachers and some SMC members are involved in preparing this action plan. All SMC members are not involved because of their other commitments, however, later on it is shared with them so that they could give their inputs. It is mentioned that in the action plan we have to involve SMC people. Therefore, we have to ascertain if it is possible for them to participate. So in that sense, they are involved. To develop this action plan, we hold sessions twice or thrice, I think. We had discussion, brainstorming and group work and then finally we designed this action plan. So all the teachers were involved and where we felt that students should also be involved, they were told, specially the students in senior classes, what was our plan. Even that plan was shared with the students in the assembly as well, like what our school vision is and what is our school development plan.

An explanation of the success of this school, particularly over the past 3 years, must take into account the leadership of the present principal and his focus on school improvement. The notice board in the Principal’s office mentions five essential components for educational leaders:

- Moral purpose;
- An understanding of the change process;
- The ability to improve relationships;
- Knowledge creation and sharing; and
- Coherence making (The Change Leadership by Michael Fullan in Educational Leadership, May 2002).

This indicates that the Principal was aware of the literature on leadership and this, most likely, came from various courses he had participated at AKU-IED and at PDCN. Fullan (2002) says “School leaders with moral purpose seek to make a difference in the lives of students” (p.17). It is clear that this was high on the Principal’s agenda and one of the ways that he expressed that agenda was through a statement of the school vision which was also prominently displayed on a notice board in his office. The notion of ‘vision’ is strongly featured in literature on leadership and this, too, indicates that he has a grounding in that literature from the courses he has done. The school vision is:

This alma mater is a learning organisation where every individual is furnished with highly commendable opportunities and facilities to attain the optimal standards of academic results, social skills, moral and spiritual qualities and physical well being. A unique team spirit with a slogan “sink or swim together” and a sense of strong collaboration among students, faculty and parents unifies this organisation. Centre of excellence is its identity.

Our slogan “Committed to quality and merit”.

Conclusion

The case study provides an overview of the school improvement efforts of the Principal and shows how he has taken a considerable number of initiatives in a wide

range of areas to create a successful school. He began with improving the physical condition of the school as that appeared to be the most urgent and would result in immediate visible change. He moved on to instructional or pedagogical leadership by way of the professional development of teachers as a means to improve the teaching and learning in the school. He engaged all the stakeholders, not only teachers and students but particularly the parents and SMC members, in the process of transforming the school. He has been what Fullan (2002) refers to as a “Cultural Change Principal ... (who is) a sophisticated conceptual thinker who transforms the organisation through people and teams” (p. 17).

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Management of a Successful Primary School in Bangladesh

Introduction

Quality improvement is an important concern in any educational programme. Decentralisation of school governance and introduction of school-based management come under the broader area of quality improvement process in education. In order to prepare the case study, we randomly selected Narail *upazila* (sub-district) and asked the respective education officer

to provide us with a short list of successful schools in the *upazila*. Academic and administrative management, head teacher’s management quality, teaching-learning environment, community participation, system management, and academic and other performance of the students were considered to find out the schools. From a list of five state-owned primary schools, one was selected randomly for the case study.

Primary School System

Primary education is compulsory and free in Bangladesh for 6-10 years aged children. Among 11 types of primary schools in the country, state-owned schools are the main stream, where over two-thirds of the primary school students are enrolled. There are 37,709 such schools fully managed by the government and the teachers are public servants. The government provides salary of the teachers and management expenses of schools. Each school has a management committee responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. These schools follow the curriculum of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of the government. The students receive free textbooks from the NCTB.

The education ministry implements primary education through a directorate. Division, district and sub-district (*upazila*) level education officials are responsible for field level implementation of primary education. *Upazila* education office is the lowest level in this line of supervision. Each *upazila* office consists of one education officer and 6-8 assistant education officers. Number of schools in an *upazila* ranges from 150 to 200. Each assistant officer is responsible for supervision of 25-30 schools. The responsibility of an officer is to visit 5 schools a month and each assistant 10 schools.

School Profile

The sample school located in rural area was established in 1947. It is 350 kilometres away from the capital city Dhaka and 3 kilometres away from the *upazila* town.

The catchment area of the school comprised of four villages where there were 311 children eligible for primary education. Number of students in the school was 431; of which 120 came from outside the catchment area. Nearly half of the students were girls and 44% were non-Muslims. A rough estimate showed that majority of the students came from poorer families with no education of the parents. There were nine learner groups studying in pre-primary to Grade V. The attendance rate of the students was higher than the national average. Seasonal variation was there – between 72% and 80%. Promotion rate was about 88%. The dropout and repetition rates were also lower in this school – 18 students dropped out in 2002 and only 4 in 2003.

The school had two structures with adequate number of classrooms. There were a pond, a garden and a large playground in the school compound. Tube-well, toilet

and electricity facilities were also available. The school had a library consisting of about 25,000 books. It was a single shift school. School hours were from 9:30 am to 4:15 pm, six days a week.

Including the head teacher, the number of teachers was 10; seven of them were females. All of them were appointed by the government. Six teachers had bachelor degree, two had completed higher secondary, and two secondary education. All of them had completed Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed) course. Seven teachers had subject-based training in Mathematics or English. One teacher had training in school library operation and the other two in Cub (junior scouting) activities. Duration of service of the teachers varied from 9 to 30 years. One teacher was a trainer of Mathematics in the *upazila* resource centre. Half of the teachers were residing outside the catchment area. There was a lady office bearer-cum-cleaner appointed by the school and she was paid by the school management committee.

School Management Structure and Organisation

According to the government rule, the head teacher is the key person in the school level management. However, he distributes total responsibility among the teachers. Responsibilities are distributed at the beginning of each year.

The school management committee (SMC) of the school was found to be active. A number of businesspersons, social workers and teachers of other institutions were associated in the committee. Some of the members had long involvement with the committee. The SMC met regularly once in a month. The role of the SMC was to review the school activities in the meeting and take decision and fix its role accordingly. The teachers were collectively reportable to the SMC. The SMC members often visited the school and two members took classes in the absence of the teachers. SMC and the community jointly lobbied for bringing good teachers in the school, establishing district education office and the *upazila* resource centre in the school compound. The SMC mobilised the wealthy people for monetary assistance in various school activities, and to also provide financial assistance to the school off and on. They maintained good relationship with the *upazila* education office.

Besides SMC, other means of community involvement were parent teacher association and mothers rally. No meeting of the parent teacher association was held during the preceding one year. However, three mothers rallies

were held. Two issues were discussed in the meetings – attendance of the pupils and learning environment at home. According to the head teacher and the SMC chair, such rallies helped motivate mothers to education. About half of the mothers were present in the rallies. The local government authority (union parishad) was not involved with the activities of this school.

Role of the Head Teacher

The head teacher was a man of 50 years. He had completed higher secondary schooling. He had 30 years of teaching experience, mostly as a head teacher. During this period, he attended over 25 training courses on various issues including school management and administration. He was selected as the best teacher in the district twice. The head teacher had long involvement with the Primary Teachers Association – he was the elected President of its district committee and now an advisor.

The school was not a good one until before 1995 as it was found during the fieldwork. The journey started in 1995 after the joining of the present head teacher. On joining, the head teacher took massive initiatives targeting to make it a good school. The head teacher was already famous before joining in this school. At the beginning, he met all the household heads in the catchment area, the local elites and the business community. He had a number of motivational meetings with the teachers. He also discussed his wish with the *upazila* education officials. He could make all understand that it was possible to develop the school if collective measures were taken. The community responded positively and the stakeholders worked together under the leadership of the head teacher.

The head teacher was found to be the best teacher in the school. His personal characteristics played a significant role in improving the school. He was friendly, responsive, honest and hard working. He was very much liked by the stakeholders – the students, parents, and the community at large. He was found as a good administrator, manager, guide, and counsellor. He maintained a warm relationship with his colleagues and the higher officials.

The head teacher was found having very clear idea about his duties and responsibilities. He had to give more time for the school than other teachers did and worked both inside and outside the school. He conducted classes, oversaw the teachers and the students' activities, and performed other academic and administrative activities

of the school. He had to maintain linkage with the district and *upazila* education offices, SMC members, and the elites in the community. "Such a linkage smoothen my activities", the head teacher said. He was observed to be present in the school before going for outside meetings and to come back before its closure. It was good to see his sense of responsibility to the school, as he said, "I do not feel good without seeing the start and the end of my school." One rough estimate showed that he had to spend 30% of his total time for teaching, 20% for overseeing the classes taken by other teachers, 20% for managerial work in the school, and 30% for various activities outside the school.

Management of Specific Processes

The school prepared the year-plan at the beginning of each academic year with the participation of the teachers and the SMC members. Both pedagogical and non-pedagogical activities were included in the plan. The plan contained the activities, names of the responsible teachers, sources of fund and dates of the events. Special teacher meetings were held for implementation of the events. The SMC members and local elites also participated in these meetings. There was a provision of weekly staff meeting in the school. The activities of the week were discussed in these meetings. The teachers were also willing to discuss their responsibilities, weaknesses and strengths. The head teacher regularly observed the classroom activities of other teachers and provided necessary feedback to them. This was effective as the head teacher had strong command on pedagogy. He was friendly to the teachers in providing feedback. The teachers were willing to get feedback from their head.

The school followed the national curriculum. No extra books were used in the classroom but both the teachers and the students were used to take books from the school library. Class routine was followed strictly and the teachers and the students were regular and disciplined. Classroom observation showed that most of the teachers taught well and they were sincere in their duties. In the absence of the regular teachers, two SMC members conducted classes. The teachers attended the classes with lesson plan and teaching materials. The head teacher was found very particular about this. There was adequate teaching material in the school. The teachers were also able to prepare materials. Lecture, discussion, group work, etc. were the common techniques used by the teachers. The teachers assessed the students in the classroom and provided necessary feedback. No homework was given to the students. The

teachers tried their best in teaching all the students, but it was not always possible due to larger class size. The school took extra care for the slow learners. Two teachers provided free tutoring to two groups of slow learners at their homes in the evening. The parents sometimes visited the teachers to talk about the progress of their offsprings. The teachers also visited the students' homes; however, they were always not able to visit all the absentee learners homes.

Special attention was paid to the scholarship examinees in the school. The prospective students were selected and separated from others at the beginning of the academic year through rigorous selection process. Three best teachers provided year long tutoring to them. Classroom teaching was much better for this group compared to others.

Relations with the Administration

The school had good relationship with the *upazila* and the district level education offices. The officials had good faith in the head teacher. Access to these administrators was not a problem for the head teacher. Being a model school, it received extra care from the *upazila* office – which included financial and other help, sending textbooks and other materials on a priority basis. On request of the head teacher, the higher officials sometimes paid surprise visits to the school. The Assistant *Upazila* Education Officer (AUEO) visited the school more than once a month. The school has unique advantage of having the district primary education office and the *Upazila* Resource Centre (URC) located in the school premises. The school was in the good book of the UEO. The school got special monetary support from the *upazila*. The head teacher agreed that the relationship with the officers depended on the respective officers. Some were good and some were not.

The school enjoyed some kind of autonomy in respect of financial, administrative and academic matters on a limited scale. The SMC initiated some sources of income to meet the financial need of the school – these included fish cultivation, tree and fruit selling and renting out of school land. The head teacher could take decision on his own in day-to-day operation of the school. Special classes for scholarship examinees and tutoring for the slow learners were two examples. The school authority employed a support staff (bearer-cum-cleaner) paid by the SMC. There are some issues on which the school level management could not take decisions. The school

could not recruit, punish or dismiss any permanent teacher, select textbooks or students. The head teacher did not feel any need of more autonomy.

Performance of the School

There was no provision of standardised achievement test at primary level, so it was not possible to compare the learning achievement of the students of this school with those of other schools. The performance of the school was good in both the final and primary scholarship examinations. On an average, the pass rate was about 88% in the school final examination. The school had a glorious performance in the scholarship exam – 2 to 3 students got scholarship each year. During the last few years, all examinees passed in the scholarship exams with good scores. Last year six students got scholarship, of which three in the talent pool; the pass rate was 100%. The school was also reputed in the fields of cultural shows and sports. The school got prizes in the district level cultural competition for several years. The Cub team of this school was reputed for its good performance.

Conclusion

It was evident from this case study that the head teacher played the key role in the success of this school, and the community and the parents participated actively. It was possible for the head teacher to play such a role because of his personality, honesty and devotion to education. He was basically himself a good teacher and was also caring for the education of others. He knew how to make others active and capable. Although, at the beginning, good teachers were brought to this school, but during the last few years a culture of making good teachers was created there itself. Classroom performance of the teachers was excellent. One important initiative of the school was income generation, which other schools can try. With all these efforts, it was not possible to take care of all the students in the classrooms. The teachers complained about the larger class size. Again, over attention to the scholarship examinees deprived majority of the learners to get interacted with the good teachers. Here the question of equity comes. It should be a serious concern of the schools in line of quality education for all.

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News from Member Institutions

Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)

Seoul, Korea

Hosted 2004 KEDI-World Bank International Seminar on *Balanced Regional Development and the Role of Tertiary Education in Korea*, during February 23-26, 2004. Participants were from World Bank, OECD, Cambridge of UK, Japan, China, Mexico, Russia and Korea.

A study aiming to implement “**The Project for Enhancing Innovation Competency in Local Higher Education Institutions**” was conducted. The study analyzed many aspects, like financial distribution by geographical area, building project-leadership on various combinations among local innovation entities, developing the indicators for selecting project-leadership, developing performance indicators, and mid-term evaluation for the project improvement.

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Undertook a process documentation study on the BRAC’s education programme for indigenous children. The aim of the study was to capture the background process for school opening under the programme.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

New Delhi, India

Organised *International Conference on Curriculum* related issues for quality of school education during February 23-24, 2004.

The Aga Khan University (AKU) - Institute for Educational Development (IED)

Karachi, Pakistan

Held *First Conference on Learning Through Networking – Celebrating Teaching Profession* on February 14, 2004.

Centre for Professional Development – Education Management (CPDEM) National Institute of Education (NIE)

Maharagama, Sri Lanka

A group of 18 Maldivian school supervisors and teachers successfully completed a nine months’ Diploma in School Management at the CPDEM.

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)

New Delhi, India

As a part of NIEPA–Nepal Project, NIEPA has organised 8 capacity building training workshops of one week each in Katmandu, Nepal during January–June, 2004 covering 175 persons from DOE, MOEs, CERID, NCED, SEDEC, SEDU, Regional Education Officers, District level functionaries and Institutional Heads. The major objective of workshops was capacity building in Decentralisation Planning in Education. The outcome of the workshops included preparation of manuals for decentralisation planning, project appraisal, monitoring and evaluation, developing District Basic Education Project Plans for 5 pilot districts and, preparation of School Improvement Plans. The NIEPA-Nepal Education Project is implemented as a part of MOU between NIEPA and DOE, Royal Government of Nepal and funded by DANIDA.

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