

“Gurukul of Losers – A 50 days challenge”

Section -1 :

THEME FOR THE CASE STUDY: “School Leadership for improving student learning and Learning outcomes”.

Title of the case study: “Gurukul of Losers – A 50 days challenge”

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Section -2

Rationale: -Our school is situated in rural Bengal.This higher secondary Girls’ school was established in the year 1967.In the academic year 2018-19,we have 1629 studentsfrom class V toclass XII. Most of them have come from lower socioeconomic strata and SC & ST students comprise 63% of total students. Moreover, more than 40% of the studentswho are getting institutional education, are the first-generation school-goers in their family.

Through our experience over the years, we found that 25-30% of the students who appear in the test examination for the Madhyamik examination (Class X board examination) come short of scoring the pass marks. In this situation, we are in the cross whether to allow those who failed in class X test examination to appear in the final with possible eventual failure in the final or to disallow them to improve the statistics of success of our school. In the later situation, very few of them take readmission leading to large number of drop-out. The consequences are varied and not just numerical. These girls become the victim of child marriage and human trafficking. Child marriage leads to baby born with malnutrition, and new family with less enlightenment about the importance of education for the future generation.

In 2017-2018, 227 were enrolled students in class X, out of which 171 passed in test exam and 56 failed but we allowed them for the final. These 56 girlswere thought to be prepared themselves at home by next two months.But unfortunately, out of them, 47 students failed in the Madhyamik and the percentage of success had come down to 79.29% for our school.

In the academic year 2018-2019, there were 175 students in class X. Out of these, 55 students failed in the test examination (5 of them failed in 7 subjects, and the rest 50 students failed in 1 to 3 subjects). They all belonged to below or equal poverty line as their guardians ran the family by doing daily labour or farming in small scales. In our school, S.C & S.T students comprised 63% of the total.

These students were first generation school-goers in their family. These 55 students were irregular in classes throughout the year as these girls could help in household chores.

From years of experience, we noticed that, the students with average IQ, tends to get scared of Mathematics and Physical science. After Madhyamik, they can easily discard these two subjects and choose the subjects they can cope up with and can easily pass H.S. In this backdrop, to overcome their difficulty in study with eventual social up-liftment in the form of avoiding child marriage and proper education of these girls with hopeful awareness about the importance of education for the next generation to come, we planned the following project.

OBJECTIVE

Primary objectives:

- **To encourage them to continue their study**
- **To help them to overcome their difficulties in understanding the subject which they fear most**
- **To make the parents understand the importance of proper education**

Secondary objective:

- **To avoid child marriage**
- **To uplift the society with new generation of educated future mothers**

Preparatory phase:

As mentioned previously, in the academic session 2018-19, 55 students failed in the test examination. So, we were very restless about the future of these students. A staff meeting was called on to discuss about our future course of action about whether to send them or not for the final examination. In that staff meeting, it was decided that we should take another test for those 50 girls (who failed in 1-3 subjects) after 10 days. But to our dismay, all of them failed in the second test, held on 17th December, 2018. We realised that it was impossible for them to improve by themselves as they didn't have the habits of reading at home.

A staff meeting was called again on 19th December, 2018 and a resolution was taken that we would extend our hands to those unfortunate girls who needed proper guidance and care to overcome the tide. It was decided that they had to attend school daily including the holidays and got to stay at

school from 10.30 to 4.40 p.m. I personally took the risk of supervising everything as a Headmistress as I reside very near to the school.

On 20th December, 2018, we called upon the guardians and informed them about our decision. We asked the guardians to discontinue the private tuition and to send their daughters to the school daily as per our plan. The positive aspect was that every guardian accepted our proposal as they had no other alternative and they enlisted their pupils' name, roll no and contact numbers in our record book. It was also informed that if someone became absent, she had to inform the school with valid reason and their absence would not be allowed except medical ground. The endeavour started from that day to achieve the impossible from both ends.

Section -3 (Methodology of the case study):

Education: Government Education Policy (RTE 2009, Internal formative Assessment) always focuses on regular attendance and to teach the students according to their receptive and adaptive capacity. During these classes, it was proved again and again. We realized that demonstration through activity and projection would be more attractive to students. The teaching must be comprised of knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and creativity to be acceptable to the students. Otherwise, all our endeavour would fail for sure.

This project was based on group discussion, identification of problems by the students themselves, clearing of doubt through teacher-student discussion, encouragements and demonstration wherever it was feasible.

As we thought audio-visual demonstration might lead to long term impact, a screening of the national award-winning Bengali motivational movie, "Kony" (1984), had been arranged. Having seen the movie, they could at least attempt the questions from that individual topic.

In mathematics, subject teacher used to change the measurements of angles and sides of a particular theorem intentionally, so that they could gather the confidence. We made sure that they did practice the statistics and variation problems of mathematics, not just from their text book but from different kind of math exercise books and that too on a daily basis so that they could be able to answer the unknown questions in the examination.

They used to learn and memorize the prose and poetry in Bengali at home, and the next day they had to tell a narrowed down version of that particular literary work as they were told that the teachers would love to hear those stories. After that, they were asked questions from that particular prose or poetry. Everybody used to answer. They staged the drama "Siraj ud-Daulah" by themselves. They intensely memorized their part to perform well and thus our intention was fulfilled that they did read the topic thoroughly. They could visualize the whole drama with long-lasting impact. Topics from Physical science, Life science (like Cell division, heredity etc.) were taught through activity and drawing.

Participatory Learning

We started these learning sessions from 20th December, 2018. As the final examination was going to start from 12th February, 2019, we had 52 days in our hand leaving one day to be mentally prepared for the examination.

We equally divided those 52 days for seven subjects (7 days for each subject)

At first, we collected question papers of those seven subjects from last five years of board examination. They had been guided to write the answers of short questions as well as the answers of some broad questions. We decided that if they could pull off to assimilate the short answers, we would work on the broad answers too.

At the beginning, we did take their attendance regularly and if anyone was absent, we called their home and asked for the reason of absence.

The students had the full freedom to choose the subject they would like to learn on that particular day. We never pressurized them that they should concentrate more on Physical science or Mathematics. We realised that if they could develop their skill of reading, they would easily identify their weaknesses. Gradually, they started to identify their problems and asked us to teach and discuss different topics which they found difficult to deal with.

Initially, we applied the traditional method of teaching but most of them were not attentive to our classes. So, we had to go according to their level of intelligence. It worked wonderfully. At the end of the day, they informed us about the part they found hard to understand. On the next day, we used a more simplified but effective way to go through that subject matter once again after finding that less complicated way to make the girls understand those topics which they found hard. We, too, got enriched as a teacher throughout the process. For the first 10 days, we were in dilemma whether we would be able to make them understand our motto. But we never pressurized them.

Sometimes, during the discussion session, if someone gave an incorrect answer, we gave the others the chance to make her correct. They were being mentored how to write answers in an organised way or do math in easy steps. Our resolution was to cook simple but healthy food out of minimum ingredients.

It was obvious that they were so weak that if we had to pull them up, we need to set our feet in their level.

Regular targeted learning and Monitoring:

As the entire school was closed from 25th December 2018 to 1st January 2019, it was possible to get more time to spend with them.

We tried to utilize the gross time spent in school to the fullest extent. They were allowed to choose places to their liking to study like library, class room, school campus etc.

Group discussion used to take place after lunch. They had to answer questions relevant to the topic they studied on that particular day. They were taught how to cope up with same questions from

different aspects. This way of studying made them enthusiastic as they could interact between themselves and the teachers.

They had to learn at least one topic each from two subjects each day and we made sure that they would be able to understand and deliver it properly.

We had to upgrade ourselves in all the 7 subjects equally. If it required, we, the teachers, consulted ourselves about the methodology and the easiest way that they could digest. Even on the working day, some of the teachers helped them to deal with their weak spots from individual subjects and asked me to help them revise those topics again when I would discuss with them in the latter half of the day.

As the new session was started from 2nd day of January 2019, all the teaching staffs became engaged in the procedure of regular work schedule like grooming up the new batch of class V, book distribution, preparation of new classes, make themselves prepare for new class X. So, it was difficult to allot them any classes for these girls. Besides these, they had to run the various government project like WIFS, MDM, different kind of Scholarships, Students data entry, Kanyasree and lots of other ongoing programs. They could not get any spare time for these students. But we regularly paid visit to those two rooms allotted to them, discussed their activity throughout the day after the school works were over. We scheduled their planning and they too planned what they were going to study at night. Their time would not be wasted as they chalked out a plan previously.

USE OF GURUKUL CONCEPT: In ancient time, through Gurukul concept, the pupils used to stay at mentor's home and get education in true sense from every aspect of life. We planned in the same line. Mentors are supposed to teach them not only different subjects but also etiquette, behaviour and group work. We tried to adopt the same theory.

As we truly believed in themselves, we decided to send them up for final exam and mentored them to achieve success.

These were the reasons behind this special task undertaken by us in 2018.

Up-keeping self-respect of the poor students:

We were aware about the dignity, self-respect and self-confidence of those students. Whenever they heard anything abusive from their classmates or from anyone else, they were encouraged to take an oath to do even better.

All of them were matured. We couldn't achieve anything by rebuking them. We thought if we could somehow light a fire in their soul, if we could somehow manage to light up their suppressed burning desire to erase all the disdain they had suffered throughout their whole life, that would be a boost for their hard work.

We felt that inculcating self-confidence would be the most essential part of all our endeavour. They had to believe in their ability and potentiality.

To encourage them, we used to tell them that we, the teachers, are specialized in one particular subject and in other subjects we have little to no knowledge. So, we have to learn daily in order to

teach them. We did tell them that as they did not read and learn carefully before, they are getting scared now but their fear would go away within few days as they had overcome those difficulties.

During the last week of December, school was on vacation. Students were allowed to read outside the classroom as it made them warm in those winter days. They were also provided with a room beside the school's main entrance. Before the re-opening of the school on 2nd January 2019, few of them asked, "if we study here, what would the students of lower classes think of us?"

We understood what was going on in their minds. They were suffering from the crisis of self-respect. They were informed that as holidays were on, this room was allotted to them. But, after re-opening, they would be provided with two rooms on the 1st floor of the building. No one would go there except the teachers. They were relieved after getting assurance from us and their happiness was reflecting in their eyes.

At first, when this special class started, a few students did taunt them. They were hurt. They came to us and shared their pain. We listened to them with compassion and empathy and advised them not to answer back. Their results would be their only weapons. They believed us. We always told them if they could believe in themselves, they would be able to do it. There were no alternatives of hard work. We always encouraged them, made them believe that they were no less than their classmates who had passed the test examination. The only disadvantage they had was that they started late but they had the potential to make it up for it. They were slowly getting their own pace to reach their destination. It was a true achievement.

After two breaks (lunch and tea), each student had to give the report of the whole day in the presence of her classmates. It also worked a lot in their favour.

NUTRITION

An empty stomach and the process of learning can never be complementary to each other. We were sceptical about their meals at home. They informed us that they too had to earn their bread by working in the field as their mothers' income was not sufficient and fathers usually spent their entire income on alcohol addiction. So, we did arrange mid-day meal for them along with boiled egg, tea, biscuits and snacks.

To make them believe that all the teachers were with them, some teachers brought fruits for them, some brought home made foods. The entire expenditure due to this mission was carried by us, the teaching staff.

There were 732 enrolled students from V to VIII. All were eligible to get mid-day meal, but a certain percentage were absent daily. This helped us to provide mid-day meal to the students of these special classes. We brought them under the facility of mid-day meal as they didn't get enough nutrient-dense foods at home because of their poor economic backgrounds.

Taking Guardian into confidence:

In 2018, before test exam, four guardian meetings were arranged with the primary agenda of maintaining regularity of students. It was already proved that if a student attends classes every day and listens each classes minutely, then she can easily achieve at least the pass marks. But it is impossible to cope up with the rhythm, if she frequently misses the classes. We noticed that the students of the sections like C or D were mainly irregular in their normal classes. It was due to the lack of ignorance of the parents. Parents also thought that as they were girl child and they had to learn the household chores as it would be helpful in their in-law's houses. But, even after a lot of effort, we failed to bring everyone to school regularly. As a result, the students continued their record of being absent. When we called the guardian after the failure of the students, every one attended the meeting. They were strictly informed about the decision the school authority had taken. We informed them to take the responsibility to send their wards to school daily including the holidays (20.12.2018 to 07.02.2019.). Then and then only the forms for sending them to final examination would be filled-up. If they failed to do that, their forms would be cancelled. Moreover, school had to be answerable to W.B.B.S.E. about the poor result. These guardians thought that those girls were almost ready for the examination as the school allowed them to fill up the form. As the parents were mostly undereducated, they didn't have the basic idea of preparing for such an important exam. They were also told that the students didn't have to be provided with any kind of private tuition as the school was taking responsibility for their daughters and that was our challenge!

Involvement of Local Administration and Educational Administration in the Project:

In the meantime, they were signed in for the form fill up with late fine because the last date for submitting form without late fine was 14th December, 2018 and their classes were started from 20th December, 2018. But we told them their forms would not be forwarded unless they got prepared well to pass in the upcoming exams. Our honourable Sub Divisional Officer of Bongaon, Mrs. Kakali Mukherjee and honorable Additional District Inspector of Schools (S.E.), Bongaon, Mr. Dibyendu Pal had paid visit to be the witness of this mission and to encourage them by saying, "You do your best and let's see if we can bring you admits." The girls believed these words of those officials. To boost confidence in them, the S.D.O. madam visited our school frequently had conversation with them for hours. My sincere gratitude towards those teachers who took test exams twice, and helped the students whenever they needed. I am also thankful to our non-teaching staffs who did provide their services during the holidays by unlocking the rooms, arranging their Tiffin and helping them in difficulties.

Section -4 (Expected Outcome):

Initially we were literally scared. However, from the end of the 1st week, we started getting positive feedback. They started asking questions which they rarely did initially. That suggested their increasing enthusiasm in study. When the result of the final examination got published, we were astonished to see that 45 out of 50 students passed the board examination. Six of our regular students got above 75% marks in the examination and made us proud by their achievement. However, those

45 students had done wonder and made us prouder. The joy of passing the board examination was evident in their faces and we all were happy, satisfied and encouraged to repeat it in the years to come.

Section -5 (Conclusion):

It's quite natural that the students that belong to the family of well-established and caring parents will do better in examination. But, around 20% - 30% students cannot achieve minimal education and ultimately are lost forever. This is alarming for the society also. So, we all should be more careful about the fact and must try to make them ready to achieve their minimal educational qualification.

Our role in the school is not merely to teach the students. It is our responsibility to educate the most socially and economically backward students.

This can only be done if we can realize the reasons of their poor performances. It could be multifactorial like social, economic and environmental. We must address those issues to make them interested in study. Our experience through our endeavour is that this is not that difficult to achieve. Though, we could never be able to achieve the success regarding this mission, if the students didn't realise that all these were for their ultimate betterment. The simple thing is to feel for them and to devote some extra-time to address their difficulties. Moreover, only helping them in study, is not sufficient. We have to address other collateral problems too. This simple endeavour will lead not only to betterment of their educational field but to the society at large. So, our understanding is that nothing is impossible if we have the will and conviction. This type of endeavour needs a lot of time and manpower which is very difficult to provide from the existing system without compromising the routine work. The most striking aspect of this programme is that it neither needed any extra infrastructural nor financial backup. SLDP training, guided and inspired me to take such collaborating and challenging mission together with all the staffs & stakeholders.

