

School leadership for school improvement and student learning

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Abstract

The School leadership is the key factor to make the behavioral changes in all stakeholders of the school and even in people of the society. In 21st century scenario the leadership should be vibrant, enthusiastic & skillful enough to deal with new challenges, technology, ideas, opportunities, policies etc. The school Improvement is holistic term which means the overall qualitative improvement of the students & staff along with good infrastructural development. The focus of the policy makers in India since its freedom is always to provide quality education to all children along with proper infrastructure facilities in the schools. All the education policies implemented in our country are advocates about the better and quality education to all children. Our most significant act in education, RTE Act-2009 gives the Right to free and compulsory Education to children up to the age of 14 years. NCERT designed and published the Targeted Learning Outcomes & Learning Objectives for each class each subject to ensure the minimum learning level of the students in class. These TLO & objectives are also meant for help to the teachers as well as parents to know the learning levels of the children as per the class & subjects. CBSE and other school boards also published the handbooks to help the schools for quality education.

Now, it is absolutely right that the efforts have been made by all concern governing agency or ministry through policies & programmes to provide the quality education to each learner but we know that the quality learning of the children still a big challenge for our country. It was seen in the Result of PISA 2012 in which the qualitative performance of our country was unsatisfied. One of the reasons of unsatisfactory quality education of country is the passive role of school leadership in school improvement and student learning.

The school leaders are like the captain of the ship. The school will move with the vision of the leader. Many things which are the parts of school improvement and student learning depends on the decision-making ability of the leader. The attitude, work ethics, belongingness, team spirit, honesty, devotion towards the work, skills, knowledge, interest and ability of coordination of the school leader will make the desirable changes in the school infrastructure and student learning. However, it is not just one mans' task to develop the entire school and to improve the learning level of students. It requires continuous support from parents, management and staff to achieve the set target. Hence the school leadership should plan as per the needs of improvement of school and always coordinate & collaborate the planning with all stakeholders for better implementation.

In this paper we will know about the role of school leader to improve the school as well the students learning through his vision and efforts.

Keywords: Qualitative & Holistic Improvement, Learning outcomes, Infrastructural development, Coordination, Collaboration, Stakeholders, Vision

Introduction

- “Leadership effects are the largest in the most challenging schools when they are coming-off their ‘low base’ and circumstances.” (Louis, et.al.,2010)

- “Leadership is arguably the greatest equalizer in circumstances of multiple deprivations of schools. (Potterson,1997)

This paper describes significant role of school leadership (Head masters / Principals) to improve the school, to gain faith of the society on school, development of physical infrastructure, make learner friendly conducive environment and learning of the student with their vision and positive attitude. This paper includes the Needs for the practices/Statement of the problem, Objectives of the practices, method adopted to implement the practice, Changes observed in processes and Their efficacy supported by evidences, and Result and Conclusion of the practices at last of the paper.

In this paper we will come to know the importance of some general abilities of a leader which are very helpful to develop the school and learning of the students such are - sufficient managerial skills, best communication tactics, self-motivation to work hard, belongingness with institution and belief in team spirit.

- The famous speech of Martyn Luther King Jr. “I have a dream” genuinely touches the hearts of millions of its followers. The leader revealed that any goal can be achieved by performing hard work, persistence, bravery and trustworthiness. (Carson,1987).

CONTEXT AND SCHOOL PROFILE:

Context

The context of this study was the school development and students learning under the leadership of the school principal of KV Churachandpur. Through the vision and dedication of its leader the school can achieve a remarkable goal.

The infrastructural of school, performance of the students in scholastic as well as Co-scholastic area, classroom teaching and learning process of teachers, active participation of all stakeholders of the school activity, discipline of the school – these are some key points where I have focused more as a leader of this school and through this practice-based study school have achieved goals which are fixed for this study.

I have faced some of the challenges related to above mentioned key points and tried to resolve the issues as a school leader.

School profile:

This practice-based studies organized and implemented in Kendriya Vidyalaya Churachandpur BSF Manipur. This school is a unit of school running by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan New Delhi, an Autonomous body under the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India. The school was established in 1986 with sponsoring agency BSF (As per KVS norms) and located in STC BSF Campus, Gangpimual Village, Dist.- Churachandpur, Manipur. This School have classes from I to class XII (only Humanities Stream in XI & XII) with Co-education facility following the NCERT text books & syllabus and affiliated to CBSE board vide affiliation no 1200005. At present total 404 students enrolled in the school in which 202 are boys and 192 are Girls. The School situated in rural area which comes under the Gangpimual Panchayat area of district churachandpur and it is more than 4 KM far away from the main town. The Scheduled Tribes majorly identified in the town so the school have 90% of students from ST category. They all are also belongs to Christian religion. The school is a govt school so all the educational policies of Govt of India is being implemented in the school through KVS HQ. The Kendriya Vidyalayas have a four - fold mission, viz.,

- To cater to the educational needs of children of transferable Central Government including Defence and Para-military personnel by providing a common programme of education;
- To pursue excellence and set the pace in the field of school education;
- To initiate and promote experimentation and innovations in education in collaboration with other bodies like Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) etc.
- To develop the spirit of national integration and create a sense of "Indianness" among children.

The Vision of KVS is

KVS believes in imparting knowledge/values and nurturing talent, enthusiasm and creativity of its students for seeking excellence through high quality educational endeavours.

Silent features of KV:

- Common text-books and bilingual medium of instructions for all Kendriya Vidyalayas.
- All Kendriya Vidyalayas are affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education
- All Kendriya Vidyalayas are co-educational, composite schools.
- Sanskrit is taught from class VI - VIII.
- The quality of teaching is kept reasonably high by an appropriate teacher-pupil ratio.
- No tuition fee for boys upto Class VIII, girls upto Class XII and SC/ST students and children of KVS employees.

And as a unit of KVS this school also trying to achieve the Mission & Vision targets with the help of all stakeholders of the school they are – teachers, parents, VMC & PTA members, Students and all other local people.

As the KVS is pace setting organisation in the field of the school education and a leading brand in country. It is biggest chain of schools in the world which is following the uniformity in syllabus, uniform, assessment and evaluation. The KVs are mainly known for its good academic transaction, excellent infrastructure, good teacher student ratio, conducting of various co-curricular activities, focus on the holistic development of child including Art, Music, Sports etc.

But most of these leading factors which are commonly observed in each of KVs throughout the country, were not up to that extent of KVS in the KV Churachandpur when I joined in the year 2017. The main challenges of the school were as - academics of the school was not satisfactory, schools' physical infrastructure was needs improvement as soon as possible as there were lack of furniture in classes & staff room, No e-classroom was available for whole school, very less enrolment in most of the classes, average level of organising of CCA, uncontrolled indiscipline of some students, passive participation of the parents in school activity, lethargic approach of the teachers towards the classroom transactions & other school activities etc.

The KV Churachandpur is one of the schools which is located in very remote area of state Manipur but it is also the part of KVS. So to make this KV similar than the KVs located in the plain area of country required full dedication and vision. Hence I tried to contribute as per my capacity with my team to address the above mentioned issues for making this KV as a student friendly place equal to mainland KVs.

Need for initiating practice/s or problem of practice-

When I joined as a school principal in KV Churachandpur Manipur, I came across some significant issues/problems involved in my school. I experienced that the school enrolment was less in every class except a few, parents were not taking interest to attend the meetings / school programme while called, learning outcomes lagging behind, infrastructure of classrooms, departments, library, morning assembly ground, games & sports were not in good condition, unkempt building and rooms with messy floor and walls, No e-classroom was available and education was focused on rote learning, teachers were teaching the students with old traditional methods, discipline of students particularly of students of IX to XII needed quick attention, guidance and counselling of the staff was also in need to implement of the various plan and activity with full enthusiasm, PTA / PTM was not organised on regular basis, gap between policies and their practices, lack of effective leadership, teachers effectiveness and poor student achievement.

This practice initiated to develop the school infrastructure, to increase the student's strength and decrease the dropout rates, built the faith of the society in school particularly of the stakeholders, making team spirit among the staff and develop the learner friendly environment for students in the school, and to implement the Govt as well as KVS policies & initiatives in true spirit. When I joined this school as a Principal in Aug. 2017, I realised that the enrolment of the students in most of the classes are very less and total strength of the school was 255 on 31.03.2017 in all together which was far below the sanctioned strength i.e. 480 (40 students per class) before my joining in KV Churachandpur. The dropout rate was also very high in VIII to XI classes particularly of girl students.

Objectives

According to Yukl (2002), the term leadership itself projects image of powerful, dynamic individuals who command victorious armies, build wealthy and influential empires, or alter the course of nations, stated succinctly people commonly believe that leaders make a difference and want to understand why. Bass (1990) states that "leadership is often regarded as the single most important factor in the success or failure of institutions". Ogawa and Scriber (2002) agreeing with a wide, diverse and growing set of stakeholders assume that, "leaders are largely responsible for school programme".

The overall objective of this study was to know the role of school leaders and to share the best practices to improve the school and students learning of school leaders. Other main objectives are as follows: -

- To know the challenging role of school leaders
- To understand the impact of school leaders on student learning
- To understand the role of school leaders in school improvement
- To understand the basic abilities to be effective an effective school leader

Method adopted to implement the practice – planning, execution, evaluation procedure.

To achieve the objectives of the study which were decided at the beginning of the practice, I have adopted practice-based-studies (PBS) which is strongly oriented towards Kendriya Vidyalaya Churachandpur . In this practice-based-studies I used multi methods of studies like Observation, brief case study, organisational studies, group study, discussion, analysis & experimentation.

Plannin

To achieve the goal and objectives the school leaders need to plan for school improvement and student learning with the following lines–

- (i) Empower others to make significant decisions
- (ii) Develop and Implement strategic development plan for school
- (iii) Implementation of policies and other initiatives of the government (Central, State/District).
- (iv) Develop the culture of trust and collaboration among the teachers
- (v) Monitoring and evaluation of quality of teachers work
- (vi) Continuous teachers' professional development programme
- (vii) Work together with higher authorities
- (viii) Take accountability and its distribution among other stakeholders of school
- (ix) Genuine feedback from stakeholders about the progress
- (x) Direct other to achieve the goal
- (xi) Influence students through action
- (xii) Appeal to Community support for students learning
- (xiii) Organizing the motivational & inspirational programme for staff & students
- (xiv) Guidance & counseling
- (xv) Development of loyalty and integrity among staff

Firstly, I have done the SWOT analysis of the available resources of the school. The capacity and strength of the staff also included in SWOT analysis. It helps me to identify the grey areas as well as the positive side of the school. After the SWOT analysis I have made the teams of the staff for a particular grey area with the instructions of proper monitoring & observation. After the teachers, the PTA and VMC members who have good grip over the local issues were requested to help the school administration to resolve the ongoing issues mainly related to parents and local community. The main stakeholders of the school i.e. the students & parents also included in the planning part because without them this work could not be completed.

The following committees/teams of teachers, parents and students have been constituted to execute the planning in proper manner at school level –

- Monitoring committee for Development of schools' physical infrastructure
- Supervision committee for Students' behaviour
- Observation committee for students' learning
- Coordination committee for making coordination among all the stakeholders
- Study Data Analysis committee
- Committee / team for monitoring of Environment awareness among the students
- Team for ensuring Cleanliness in the school campus
- Committee on social Values and ethics
- Students team for classroom management
- Parents team for support and cooperation for betterment of school
- Executive Committee for overall responsibility of all works

Execution of plan

Making a plan of action is the starting line of the long running but a step ahead from the beginning. I have thoroughly gone through to the issues which were identified earlier as per context of my school. Before start of execution of the plan I have checked and verified some data of school such as - available resources (Infrastructure as well as financial), capacity of colleagues (Their qualification & trainings), cooperation level of other stakeholders (like parents, PTA members, General public of locality) and attitude of the learners etc.

The plan has been discussed with all teams/ committees in details with the goal & objectives. I have divided the broad goal of school improvement and students learning in to the small duration goals with fix objectives.

School Improvement

Renovations of school building

The committees or team constituted for this purpose were made sensitized about role and responsibilities. They were explained about the task and how it would be finished in time. The members of committees also distributed the fix assignment related to work to monitor and report back about the daily progress to school principal. The lack of infrastructure was identified by committee constituted for and this report was presented before the VMC and PTA for their support by the principal. VMC and PTA members supported the renovation of school building and other infrastructure in the meetings and requested to the principal to take this agenda point in the knowledge of higher authority of KVS as a huge fund was required

for this work. During regular PTM of the schools the same issue was raised by the parents also and requested to principal for the good infrastructure for the student.

So as per the inputs given by parents, PTA members and VMC Members this matter of infrastructure has been put up before the higher authority of KVS and they sanctioned the budget for major repairing of school building after making continuously efforts on regular intervals. The support of VMC and PTA was highly recommendable in this task.

After granting of the fund from KVS the infrastructure development has been started by construction agency. Further I had constituted a committee for monitoring on the construction work. I have asked the agency to use the different colours in each wall of classrooms of primary classes so it will look nice. I again asked them to use 3 to 4 type of colours to paint the school building, inside classroom, corridors, pillars, windows etc. and they did it.

Here if the school leader not involved himself with his vision to instruct the agency, then the contractor could complete the task with his own choice or minimum efforts. Hence the involvement of school leader with the committee made the differences.

Improvement in other infrastructure

Everyone knows that the school requires a lot of things for smooth function. Before the joining in this school my previous school was equipped with full infrastructure and I had the same thinking about my new school. But it was not a good experience when I visited the school on my first day. Class rooms were dusty & messy, furniture was inadequate in most of the classes, no proper arrangement of drinking water, Toilets were not in good condition, even staffroom was required a lot of change to be called a staffroom, lack of proper cleanliness observed in corridors as well as in departments and so on. I was comparing my present school to my previous school and it was completely opposite from the previous one. It was very disheartening to see the conditions and situations of the KV like this. It was a bitter experience. So, I started thinking to make over the issues and bring this school to similar or in comparison of any other KV. So, first of all I started the change with cleaning of the school. For this I asked the committee members & school sweepers to make a complete plan of action for one week and report the progress of the task on daily basis. The cleaning staff came in to the action and did a wonderful work within 5 days. Now the classrooms, departments, corridors were looking nice. Simultaneously I call a meeting of class teachers and Class Monitors (Boys & Girls) on the same issue "Cleanliness of classroom and corridors" and assigned the task of monitoring of cleanliness of class to them. the class teacher and monitor will be held responsible if any classroom found dirty after the one week. They were also asked for classroom decoration with displaying of charts and other required information of class. A committee of some class teacher and monitors has been formed for the purpose. This committee has done a good job and the issue of cleanliness of classroom became a movement. I announced the prize for "Best clean class of the Week" in primary as well as in secondary section separately. It created a healthy competition among the students towards the cleanliness of classroom and school as well. This programme became a favorite one of each student by choice.

Similarly, I have constituted a committee for beautification of the school campus which consists of teachers and students. The task for the committee was to identify the area where they could do some beautification work and make some development in school beautification. Also started a new task towards the environment conservation through plantation drive. For this purpose, I have asked to district forest officer for new plants and also ask the student to

bring a plant of their choice from their home and do plantation at school. This event was a successful one. The committee motivated the students for conservation of plants and plantation. We have started to celebrate the “Van Mahotsav” programme for making the students sensitive towards our environment. The committee also prepared lots of work to display in the school corridors, classrooms, departments and also implemented the BaLA project.

So, we can say that the guidance and motivation of the school leader is inspire to the team of staff and the students of school to do their level best. The leader should try to pull out the best things from them. He/she has to channelized the capacity and energy of the young & talented minds in to a right direction. A best leader can make a desirable change among the followers. As I did nothing but set the direction to move. I just utilized the energy, capacity, talent, and stamina of the staff, parents and students for improvement of school. These all things were there before but here one thing was in addition i.e. the new school leader. So we can say that the role of the school leader for improvement of school is huge and has no limits.

School leadership for Students Learning

- “25% of the total school effects on student learning comes from School leadership. It is second only to classroom interaction.” (Leithwood, et.al.,2004).

1.1 As it is a fact that the school leadership has a visible impact on students learning.

This is a great responsibility of a school leader to play this role in a befitting manner and to ensure the learning of the students of the school. He has to develop the good repo among all the stakeholders through his actions.

To ensure the better learning of the students of my school, I have tried the following planning and strategies and achieved the goals –

- Observed the grey areas which are hurdles to achieve the students learning in the school
- Plan for implementation of the strategies with consultation of teachers
- Continuous supervision of the work of teachers & students
- Regular SWOT analysis of the progress
- More involvement of the students in class room activities
- Adopted child centered class teaching pedagogy by the teachers
- Focus on understanding of concept
- Continuous Feedback from parent and students about the performance

Changes observed in processes and their efficacy supported by evidence -

The practices as well activities which were obeserved by me in ealry days of my joining in the school iro of students learning are as follows-

- The Students’ focused was on rote learning.
- School teachers were mainly imphasised & useing the traditional method of teaching.
- The Parents contribution to school was very limited. They havn’t turned up to school on call.

- The name of the school in local society and town was not praiseworthy.
- Student and teachers were not have too much of belongingness to school, hence have less amount of interest to initiate a new task or assigned work.
- Schools' infrastructure and basic amenities needs immediate action to improve.
- Campus of school was lots of work to do for development.
- Lack of coordination was spotout in the stakeholders.
- No high ambition and vision found among the students.
- Learning outcomes were not ensured by teachers during classroom teaching
- Minimum level of learning was not satisfactory.

First of all, the priorities of the work/task have been framed, the tasks were categorised and preference was given accordingly. As per priority the distribution of task was as follows – task which needs immediate action, most important task, very important task, important task and general routine task.

After categorisation of the task I started to execute the implementation minutely. Before the implemetation I had sensitise all the stakeholders of school about the grey areas and my planning to makeover of these issues through various occassions, meetings, discussions, seminars, classroom activities etc. Apart from sensitization I have formed the various task forces cum committees of staff and students for implementation and monitoring of the progress.

The impact on school develeopment and students learning was very slow at the beginning of the practice due to inertia and habit of old practices. The students of school were interested to continue the old practices in classrooms. Teachers were also in the same mindset and was in favour of flexibility. I did counseling of the students and teachers to bring them with me for better implementation of practices according to the targeted goals. The cooperation of parents was highly admirable as they supported the practices for better results of their wards in upcoming years.

After a time span of 6 months to one year, I have observed that the students, teachers and parents have more focused towards the goal than privious time. The school students started to join the school in time, started active participation in school activities and outside of school activities, shown more attentiveness in clasroom activities, spent more time with books, more interested to sit in the school library & labs, much regular to attend the classes, teachers adopted the new methodology of class teaching which includes the technology as a part.

The task force cum teams/committees were effectively doing the allotted work. At end of every fortnight, I had feedback cum review meetings with these task forces, in which I have received the status report of ongoing progress of allotted work. On the basis of feedback received from various committees, I have reviewed the strategies of works according to the need for next fortnight and so on for upcoming months. Further I had talk with parents about the learning level of their wards between the 6 months and 1 year gap, they mentioned their satisfaction on the learning of children along with positive changes in behaviour. In continuation to this I was personally monitored the teaching methodology adopted by the teachers in classes and found that maximum teachers using technology based practices in daily classroom teaching. The discipline of the staff and students during the school was came up to the good level. It was observed during the class time, lunch time and even in play ground in sports period. The school became more environment conserver through plantation and preservation of trees. The development in infrastructure was clearly visible. Entire school building was painted with attractive colours, windows & glass pans repaired, floor of

classrooms were repaired, furniture procured, painting of children park have done, BaLA (building as a learning aid) implemented, students creativity published through school magazine & newsletters, 100 % results in cbse board classes achieved continuously. The enrolment which was not satisfactory reached upto 415 in 2020. The students participation in various activities like – Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat, NCSC, Pariksha pe Charcha, SBSB, Art & Music competitions increased significantly hence the name of school shine in the locality. 01 student selected for Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020.

The students result of board classes i.e. X & XII as well as the admission data is given in the table 1 & table 2 as evidences of the change. The staff members received the certificates and recognition for their hard work by authorities. The students of school continuously receiving prizes and certificates for various achievements. This is a big achievement for school leader that his/her students and staff members making the differences through his/her vision and leadership.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Through this practice-based-studies I came to know that School leadership has played a vital role in school development and student learning. The school leader can make the desirable changes in the school infrastructure, resources, performance and as well as in students' behaviour with his positive approach, vision, collaboration, coordination, decision making ability, team spirit and management skills.

The learning of the students depends on the ability of teachers, support of parents, activeness of the students in classrooms, conducive environment of school and these all can be possible to happen through the vision and effective management of school leaders. The school leader should coordinate an effective coordination among the teachers, parents, students and other stakeholder and it will depends on the will power, hard work and good managerial skills of a school leaders and if this efforts goes towards in positive direction, the learning level of students will surely increase and the school will grow towards the positive side.

At last of as the brief conclusion of this study, I would like to mention that a school leader not only worked as a leader of a particular school but he/she also a hope for all other leaders of the field where the school development and student learning are on top priority. This school development and students' learning is not a years goal, but it is the continuous process to be looking after by the leaders. Every steps after the achievement of fixed goal should be upgraded towards fixing of next higher goals and so on. The results of this type of continuous practices and efforts will helps the students and parents to achieve the desirable goals setted by them for their future course of study.

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Table 1

CBSE Board Class results of Last 6 years :

The performance of the students is showing their learning levels.

a) AN OVERVIEW ON CBSE CLASS X RESULT OF KV CHURACHANDPUR (LAST 6 YEARS PERFORMANCE) :

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
PASS %	97.37	100	100	100	100	100
Performance Index	48.62	36.84	58.04	50.5	47.3	47.86