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Module 2

CHANGE LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: REDEFINING THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN INDIA

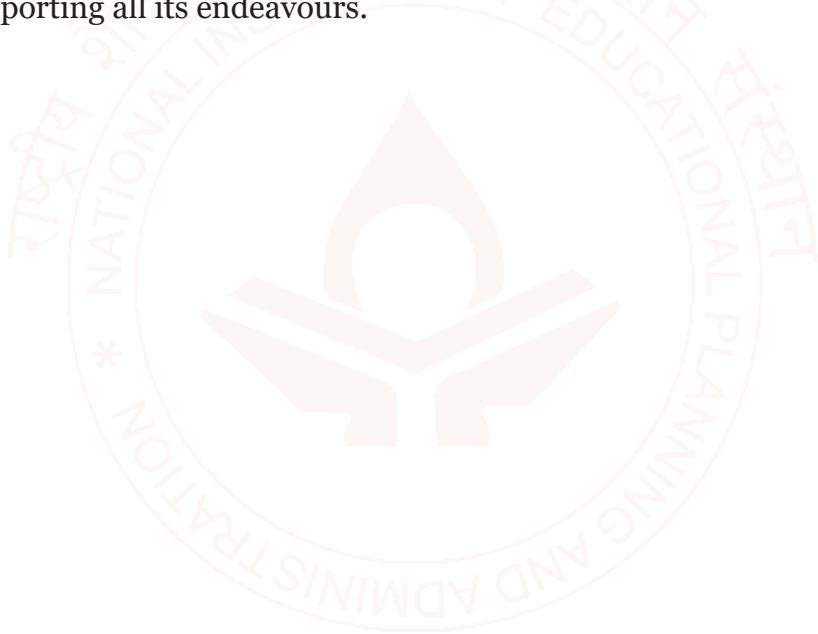
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2022



The National Centre for School Leadership, NIEPA is grateful to Samagra Shiksha, Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India for supporting all its endeavours.



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KEY AREA
PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

**CHANGE LEADERSHIP FOR
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:
REDEFINING THE ROLE OF
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN INDIA**

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Published - November 2022

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ISBN - 978-81-953899-1-9

Published by the Registrar

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi and Designed by National Centre for School Leadership, NIEPA



Introduction

Principal leadership matters the most in improving the quality of a school. Primarily in the wake of bringing overall improvement in the school, the leadership role of the principal becomes critical and challenging. The spectrum of functioning of a principal leader becomes wider, right from meeting the professional and educational needs of teachers as well as needs of students to ensure that the school improves over time within the limits of physical and human resources available to it.

The module focuses on the importance of the role of School Heads/principal as a leader and how leaders can bring about changes in the teaching faculty, eventually leading to school improvement. Drawing from policy documents, literature and research, change leadership is seen as a viable pathway towards improvement. The reflections on school-based initiative by practising school principals find a special place in the module in order to draw attention to the criticality of conceptualising school leadership to bring school-based change and improvement when seen in a ‘context’.



Learning Outcomes

On completion of the module, school leaders will be able to

- Understand the significance of role of a principal in bringing change in the school and understand their role as a change leader for school improvement.
- Gain insight on how strategies adopted by school heads in complex situations can lead to school transformation and can devise some strategies of their own for transformation in their school

Sections	Topic
Section 1	Understanding the Role of a School Head as Change Leader
Section 2	Change Leadership for School Improvement
Section 3	Change Leader: Devising Strategies for School Improvement



SECTION 1

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF A SCHOOL HEAD AS CHANGE LEADER

Learning Objective: To understand the role of a school head as leader in initiating the change

Key Words: School improvement; Change leader; Leadership

Introduction

A School Head/Principal is seen as the ‘champion’ and ‘initiator’ for transforming ordinary into effective schools (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999). At the same time, experiences across the world have demonstrated that system level changes and inputs are inadequate to bring about any significant change in the functioning of a school and its effectiveness, in impacting student learning. There are no standard prescriptions for improving schools and managing change within. The school principal, as a dynamic leader, is endowed with the capability of bringing school-based transformation by taking small initiatives for bringing internal efficiency within the school (Diwan, 2000). The principal as a change leader is expected to introduce changes that matter the most in a given school situation. They are expected to provide leadership by fostering an environment for change by critically analysing the current situation, exploring possibilities, identifying the potentials of staff members and students, creating learning opportunities for each of them, and finally working on what eventually counts.

The role of school heads can be defined in certain specific ways but they may not capture the entire gamut of the functioning of schools.

The Indian Policy Framework: Roles Defined for School Head/Principal

Dating back to 1952, the Secondary Education Commission Report (1952-53) considered that the influence of the principal was greater as a school leader who functions as a link between the school and the community. The school leaders were expected to build collaborative culture and team spirit among the colleagues.

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) popularly known as Kothari Commission emphasized that ‘the School head and the senior teachers have a special role to play in providing guidance to the new teachers through planning his work and organising suitable activities like staff study circles and discussion groups’.

The National Policy on Education (1986) and its Programme of Action (1992) recommended decentralisation of educational administration through the “creation of a spirit of autonomy for educational institutions with greater role assigned to the institutional head”. The Indian policies have clearly asserted that school improvement and quality education are largely dependent on the autonomy and empowerment of head teachers. Considering leadership of a school principal as a highly specialised job, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) on Universalisation of Secondary Education (2005) proclaimed the crucial role of a principal as the key to quality management and self-renewal of schools.

The recent Model Education Code (2015) defines 79 duties and responsibilities of School Heads in India divided into thirteen categories. These categories elaborate on internal efficiency of the schools i.e. time table, school curriculum, responsibility towards students, responsibility towards parents and community, matters pertaining to teachers, admissions, infrastructure, coordination with the Local Authority, school records, School Management Committees (SMCs), financial responsibilities, delegation of authority and power.

Role of School Heads/Principals: Beyond Administration and Management to Leadership

The pronouncement in the existing policies in India focuses more on administrative and managerial responsibilities, but remains silent on the role of a School Head/Principal as a dynamic leader capable of bringing school-based improvement. Many challenges that are faced in the process of improvement of school come from the “straightjacket policy” followed in our schools, irrespective of the size, location and contexts in which schools’ function.

The estimated existence of approximately 2000 schools per district across 36 states and union territories, 737 districts and 7202 blocks in India leads to leadership complexities and a wide contextual variation. King (2002) claimed that no two schools are similar when comparing the socioeconomic status, race, academic needs, family needs, and demographics. Every school has a distinctive characteristic with no similarities when it comes to the context in which it functions. Leadership complexities in India arise due to the school size, location and contexts. The size and location of a school has serious implications for leadership challenges. Western research and literature consider small schools as the best schools provided they are operating in a non-threatening environment and serving diverse student populations. Leithwood et. al. (2004) validates that small primary schools provide more opportunities for school principals to spend time in the classroom and closely monitor teachers, whereas in large secondary schools the school principal tends to influence teaching more indirectly and may rely on teachers or department heads to engage in curricular issues. Increased workload for single and two teachers grappling with multilevel, multistage teaching methodologies and pedagogies add to the day-to-day leadership challenges. Such schools have not been able to transform and cater to the needs and demands of its stakeholders who have largely remained excluded from the mainstream and have been labelled as poor schools

for the poor while the head teacher has been dubbed as an isolated entity (Diwan, 2012, 2015). The leadership challenge can be particularly seen in the absence of preparedness to address the needs of children in scattered tribal populations, habitations in remote hilly, disadvantaged areas, conflict prone areas, girl children often with special needs, physically challenged children and religious and linguistic minorities. Language is one of the greatest factors linked with the curriculum. The issue of language indicates the challenge which the principal (who is also a teacher) faces and which is not that simple as it looks. In India, there are 438 living languages, 22 official languages and 29 languages with more than one million speakers. Addressing the learning needs of all children in the schools located at different corners and speaking different languages becomes challenging for a teacher and for the leadership role of a school principal. The 'contextual' realities of schools in which school principals work is never recognised. This calls for the leadership role of school principals at all levels --- beyond administration and management to more contextual leadership requirements.

There is thus the need to look at schools and the role of principals in new and profound ways, as leaders. It is only when there is realisation that schools must change, that a shift in the role of a principal from administrator to leader can be conceptualised.

From Principals to Leadership

As a leader, the principal needs to see the redefined role as an architect of change providing meaningful inputs to school improvement. Two important factors make school principal a leader :(i) vision, (ii) team formation for goal attainment.

School leadership can be brought about in action by reflecting and articulating a school-based vision. Vision provides direction to the entire process of change taking the school strategically to newer heights. Leadership literature (Sergiovanni, 1990; Manasse, 1986) characterises

the leader as a vision holder, the keeper of the dream, or the person who has a vision of the organisation's purpose. Bennis (1990) states: "All leaders have the capacity to create a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place and the ability to translate that vision into reality." It is here that the vision of a school leader holds promise for bringing change inherently in the school culture. Manasse (1986) conceptualises this aspect of leadership as 'visionary' leadership with four types of vision: organisation, personal, future and strategic.

Davies and Ellison (1997) comment: "If schools are swamps, then every swamp dweller has to be able to plot her/his own path towards an agreed destination". This implies that the leader identifies the areas of school-based change, chalks out the processes in accordance to the schools' priorities, identify the gaps, focus on a specific goal at one time, reformulates the direction of the school, taking along the staff as a team, brings differential 'mindsets' together at a common platform, works on what needs to be done more to meet the goals determined by the school team. The entire journey means a steady move with the school team towards the desired goal.

School Heads/principals, as leaders, have to ensure academic improvement. The school principal brings in a model of good practice in teaching by forming teaching teams or becoming a member of the Professional Learning Community (PLC). The main idea of forming a PLC is to create a team of professionals, subject experts and teachers of neighbouring schools in order to help explore and improve the teaching-learning process and methodology, strategies for addressing the specific areas of weakness for students in a particular subject, specific learners who need to be targeted in the commonly identified weak areas, assessment and several other day to day pedagogical issues. A PLC promotes teacher leadership, which is an initiative taken to bring in change towards improving the school processes.

Broader Leadership Practices to Contextual Leadership

The notion that one style fits all is the conventional style of management and therefore it no more holds significance. The leadership of school principals have to be seen in the 'context' in which an individual school or a group of schools functions. The leadership challenges in coastal area schools in Odisha will require different skills than coastal schools in Tamil Nadu where in some parts, due to floods or natural disasters, every year schools get washed away and new structures are then built. Leading residential schools in rural surroundings will be completely different from the schools in urban areas, especially those serving the marginalised and disadvantaged. Child labour is more rampant in factory areas, coal mining fields, tea gardens, agricultural lands, etc, which therefore bring different challenges to the class room practices and have implications for curriculum and teaching methodology, requiring differential school-based leadership needs. Schools in border areas bring challenges for principals, teachers, parents and children in maintaining an academic climate while coping with life in the school despite disturbances.



Exercise 1

Can you think of any situations (3-4) in your school where an administrator/ principal will need to exercise his/ her leadership beyond his/ her role as an administrator/ principal?




Exercise 2

Do you see yourself as an administrator or a leader? Write the following for your school/situation:

- i. vision;
- ii. strategy for team formation for goal attainment

Let us sum up

- The notion that one style fits all is the conventional style of management and therefore it no more holds significance.
- As the schools in India are full of diversity and each school is different, actions have to be taken by considering the needs of the children. The leadership of school principal has to be seen here in the 'context' in which an individual school or a group of schools functions.
- There is a need for looking at schools and the role of principals in new and profound ways as leaders. This could be possible only when one realises that school must change.
- A principal needs to see their defined role as an architect of change providing meaningful inputs for school improvement. Two important factors make a school principal a leader: (i) vision and (ii) team formation for goal attainment.



SECTION 2

CHANGE LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Learning Objective: To understand how change leadership is related to school improvement and to spot ways to initiate change in school

Key Words: Change leadership; School improvement; Team work; Autonomy; Climate for change

Introduction

Leadership is increasingly seen as a key factor in school effectiveness and improvement (Hallinger and Heck, 1998), but change leadership is much more an integral part of school improvement. Change may be planned or unplanned, but in all circumstances school improvement requires a roadmap for implementation. This requires long-term planning, more for holistic development, coupled with workable, feasible and practical strategies. Change leadership and school improvement have a symbiotic connection and, to make it more enduring, there is so much to reflect on research that provides practical strategies for school principals on how to go about.

Scholars may give different names to good schools as excellent, effective, successful, but the prime inference mainly points to the leadership interventions that have made the schools so. The schools need to be recognised as a matter of heart and school principal as the key driver of change. To initiate change for the improvement of schools, researchers have stated what needs to be done.

Generate a Climate for Change

The schools today are in the public domain as never before and this calls for a paradigm shift. In such a renaissance, it has become a necessity for schools to transform and therefore it is equally important for a principal to feel and articulate the need for change. No change can happen until school staff are made to believe that change is necessary. Sensitising them about the reason for change must occur, show discrepancies between the current (undesirable) and the future (more desirable) states of affairs, and therefore there is a need to communicate positive, realistic expectations for the advantages of the change. Change leadership works best with the collegial model adapted by the school principal, reinforcing the spirit that ‘this is my project attitude’ among the school staff working as a team. There will be no competition between the schools. Every

school will have its own plan for implementation, with its own criteria of improvement. As depicted by Fullan (1993), in order to set the tone of cultural change, we need “*paradigm shifters*” and “*idea champions*.”

Bring all Team Members on a Common Platform

Change leader moves strategically through consultations with team members. The team includes selected members from School Management Committee (SMC), School Development Management Committee (SDMC), School Management Development Committee (SMDC), school staff, teaching and non-teaching, or active community members and parents, local leaders, administrators who may not be a part of SMC/SDMC. Studies have also been indicating that strengthening interpersonal relationships, not only inside but also outside the school, is the key to bring school-based improvement. Barth (1991) suggests that strengthening interpersonal relations and collegial conversations focus more upon what is occurring in the school and, in particular, upon what needs to be done to improve the quality of education for students. Change leadership is all about becoming receptive to the signals of change, preparing accordingly and opening new vistas within possible means (Harris and Young, 2000).

Question of Autonomy

An issue of concern that matters the most when it comes to what should be done to ensure that change works, is the extent of autonomy exercised by the principal. The question of autonomy of school principals to implement changes has also been raised by a few studies. Diwan (2009) recognised the capability of school principals as leaders in transforming schools, provided they are given autonomy to make decisions for bringing in school-based change leading to improvement in a highly bureaucratic and a hierarchical setup. Stephan Gerhard Huber and Daniel Muijs (2010) stated that effective leadership by the school principal helps

create the conditions wherein teachers can be made to become ‘optimally effective,’ which in turn results in higher levels of pupil performance. The impact could be indirect and modest, but greater influence is exerted by the school principal when autonomy is greater.

Navigate School-Based Improvement

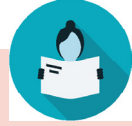
It has been established that change does influence school improvement; and it is just the differences in the trajectory of schools’ effectiveness. Some schools improve more rapidly while ‘less effective’ schools would take several years to move on the path of improvement (Gray, Goldstein and Jesson, 1996). Recognising the importance of an effective principal, Suzanne et al (2016) suggested, particularly for struggling schools, that setting a tone and building consensus around a strong, student-focussed vision is a key driver for change. The process of school transformation begins by building a shared vision for the school and involves all in teams to translate the vision into real school practices, eventually fostering improvement from within.

School-based improvement comes when a trajectory is followed from vision building to a development plan strategically prepared and implemented through concerted efforts of openness, communication and involvement of the staff. Once the process of improvement begins, it is for the entire team to sit together and build one common vision for the school. While vision is a broader canvas drawn for a school to accomplish, the school-based development plan is much more an in-depth exercise. The plan keeps in view the diversity in contexts, needs, priorities, goals, targets, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and the time frame for each activity. The plan targets clear, approachable, understandable goals/mission/vision within the parameters of the school’s framework. This exercise mainly implies taking decisions for future actions, with a view to achieving predetermined objectives, through the optimum use of available resources in a specified time frame.

Shared vision and the school-based development plan through team efforts are two critical elements for a school principal to take on the lead for targeting clear, approachable, understandable goals/ mission/ vision within the parameters of the school's framework.

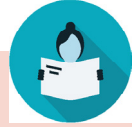
There is in fact a complete cycle of school-based improvement and leadership interventions to drive schools towards constant change and development. The cycle of leadership and school improvement follows a definite course of action to bring about desired changes in one self and the school.

Once a school-based development plan is implemented, it would be to have a revisited vision and mission for the school with a clear strategy, direction, a plan for renewed competencies and skills of the team including teaching and non-teaching staff and building capacities for strengthening new behaviours. It would also include generating discussions in-house for promoting a culture of resolving credible problems with alternative solutions, preserving the decisions for improving schools as a self-sustaining system and dependency confined to financial allocations on external forces, while on other matters concerning the school to the bare minimum.



Exercise 3

What are some of the situations to be ensured by the school principal/administrator to initiate change in her/his school?




Exercise 4

While preparing a school development plan, what aspects you would consider as important for the improvement of your school as school principal/administrator?

Let us sum up

- Change influences the improvement of schools. Thus, it is necessary to sensitise the school staff about the need for change to occur, by showing the discrepancies between the current (undesirable) and the future (more desirable) states of affairs.
- To bring change, there is a need to create a climate for change through positive communication, with motivation to work in cooperation and to strengthen the interpersonal relationships.
- The capability of the school principal to initiate and implement changes also depends upon the extent of autonomy which he/she has. Autonomy given to school principals can have indirect or modest impact. With greater autonomy, the influence is greater.



SECTION 3

CHANGE LEADER: DEVISING STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Learning Objective: To understand processes and practices in developing positive school climate and the role of school leadership

Key Words: Positive school climate; School leadership; School improvement

Introduction

For a school principal in Indian context, it is not an easy proposition to become a change leader, particularly when this position is at the lowest step of hierarchy in a bureaucratic school setup. Creating fundamental transformation in a school is like climbing a mountain (Zimmerman and Judith, 2004). In a hierarchical formal school structure, the voices of principals may not have been heard, but their passion and energy has not diminished. Such principals openly announce that they have the capacity to transform the processes and people in their own ways. This could happen only when there is a desire to see change in the school and accordingly their entire course of thought processes and strategies got harnessed. They may have taken risky decisions at times but also realise that they will also have their safety nets built around them.

Paragraphs in boxes below indicate the complexities which school principals have gone through and the strategies that have helped them in transforming the obtaining situations.

Combating Self-Interests and Group Dynamics

Leading change in a situation where conflicts have become more rampant and have created obstructions in smooth functioning of school, the school principal takes the staff through a process of introspection, examination, identification and analysis in place of blaming and nagging the system.

Situation 1

Overcoming Conflicts, Internal Dynamics and Differences: Paving the Way for School Improvement

The woman principal is transferred to an unaided private school with extreme incidences of inter and intra departmental conflicts. As a majority of school teachers claim to have strong political links, they think too high of themselves and therefore act headstrong. Their involvement in the school was confined to personal interests and political manipulation. For their personal benefits they could go to the extent of harming others. They were divided into several groups that led to disrespect for each other even when they were made to sit together to arrive at a consensus on serious issues concerning the school. Each holds strong views and does not respect the opinions and views which the colleagues hold. One of the teachers, more inclined to harm others, would go to the extent of using authority for seeking information under 'Right to Information' to harass the fellow teachers. This resulted in conflicts, disconnect from school activities, least concern for education of children and therefore no improvement.

The new principal tried hard to handle conflicting situation by opening dialogue but all she had to face was failure. She took the matter to management of the school and it was because of their intervention that issues got temporarily settled but they erupted again. This was the time when she had to face harassment on several occasions at the hands of the "State Information Commission". Aggrieved by the situation, the principal started taking time out to seriously think on the root cause, options available, and possible solutions to knotty problems.

Based on the introspection and self-analysis, a list of 20 priority areas was generated, two issues of utmost priority identified, strategies worked out for each area and then one by one putting into practice. She started counselling sessions with teachers to make them understand the importance of spending time together, enhancing their sense of belongingness and ownership to the school, and respect for each other. Slowly she started practising on “Reward your loyal people, others will follow suit.” A few teachers still continued to create hurdles by picking up conflicts with colleagues but, to a large extent, the principal succeeded.

The next focus of the principal was on converting this unaided private school to a government-managed school. She started working on the proposal for submission to the government. With her outstanding arguments, she succeeded in convincing the government that led to recognition of the school as government-funded organisation. On her request, the problematic teachers were transferred to different schools. The school was awarded for being one among the best institutions because of its innovative practices in all spheres, right from teaching learning process in classroom settings to whole school development.

***Learning:** Principal as a change leader takes the team of teachers along in building an innovative school.*

Situation 2

Converting Teacher Weaknesses into Strengths: Channelising the Potentials

The new principal took charge of the school and the outgoing principal warned that he may not stay for long because of extreme groupism among teachers. The principal became vigilant and started preparing and planning for facing the challenge. Before joining the school, the principal did some homework at his end about how to get the groups reconstituted, what code of conduct for teachers should be followed, what works in such situations, etc.

On the first day, the principal asked the teachers to sit in groups of their choice and introduce each other. Giving them the liberty of choosing their own group, the principal could judge the nature of group formation. Then they were made to sit in the groups formed by the principal: Group one comprised senior teachers, second of mid-career teachers, and third group of young and energetic teachers.

An interactive session on the policy on code of conduct and professional ethics for teachers was generated. The teachers enthusiastically participated and raised lots of queries and sought clarifications on different issues on the education code. As the discussions proceeded, there was clear indication on the spirits with which the code was being taken by the teachers.

The subjects taught in the school were listed out and divided in to three major categories and each group assigned the responsibility of one category. A leader of each group was identified to lead the discussions on how to improve teaching in the subject.

The principal became the member of the young group as they were in majority and also positive towards change. This group got convinced on the importance of the new teaching pedagogy that helped in planning and rescheduling of several activities through self-initiated professional development programme on multi-ability skills, multiple intelligence, teaching methodology, classroom organisation and management, groupings of different subjects, etc. The teachers now in the new groups were seen to be motivated and a new understanding among them emerged with focussed attention on pedagogical innovations. The group presentations were made mandatory substantiated with extensive reading of literature and innovating new forms of teaching methodologies of all subjects taught in the classroom settings of the school. In the process, the teachers forgot about the informal groups that they had formed once and the politics they were indulged in. In three months time gradually one could see complete diversion from the previous group. In next six months, there was a complete transformation.

***Learning:** Team Formation, focussed direction and leadership skills required for turning around a school*

Mapping Change in a Specific School ‘Context’

Assessing differential leadership challenges and exploring on what works best in the ‘context’ of a particular school is the key to success.

Situation 3

Taking Children from Mines to School

Children in mine area schools belong to labour class, deprived of a decent living. Admission to a particular school is only through a written test. The interference of the local area is to the extent that admissions are only provided to children who fail in the examinations. Such situations generate obligations for children to work as laborers in the mines or cracking stones and were also forced to take up menial jobs in the cities. A principal joins this school and could immediately sense the seriousness with these challenges, more grave in nature, need to be confronted first than addressing issues concerning overall school improvement or learning needs of children.

The parents of working children were called to the school the next day of joining and only four of them arrived. The principal devoted time to make them understand the value of education and the only means of taking them out from the drudgery of work and hunger. They were explained how one can earn daily livelihood through labour but one can have good living coupled with happiness in life only through education. They all agreed and supported the principal. The next step was to meet the person who forced them to struggle as bonded labour.

Next day, ‘Thakur Sahib,’ this is how he was addressed in the village was invited in the school, greeted with tea and snacks, requested to free those children who are bonded labour in his

mines and allow them to come to school for study. It was made clear to him that this is an offence and such persons could be arrested and heavily fined. Somehow, 'Thakur Sahib' was briefed on the consequences he might face if he doesn't agree to surrender and, eventually with much persuasion, he was convinced and agreed to free the kids working in his mines. Initially a few children started coming to school and later all were sent to school by their parents.

***Learning:** Principals' understanding of the context and knowledge about rules and regulations, laws and rights matter most in turning around of the school.*

Situation 4

Making of a Vibrant School

The principal, on joining a government school for girls, finds the results of board examination deteriorating every year. On further probe, it was seen that children of Class IX were unable to read through the text uninterrupted even in Hindi. The main reasons attributed by the teachers were non-detention policy which allowed promotion to the next class and, also the irregularity and punctuality of parents to send their girls to the school regularly. At the same time, the principal could see the non serious attitude of teachers as well.

It was decided to visit the village and make the parents aware of the importance of education, especially of their daughters. But a new dimension came into view. The villagers complained of the garbage deposited against the wall and open field at the back of the school, which led to irregularity in attendance of children and teachers. It was shared that it's been more than 50 years since the habitants of the adjacent village had been dumping their household garbage and animal dung in the same place. The intention was seen to be mainly encroaching the land lying vacant behind the school. Despite several follow-up requests, it was neither removed nor the practice stopped. In the rainy season, it became impossible to sit in the school or even to cross the premises. On top of that, due to seepage in the wall, electric current would pass that became a perpetual problem every day. A wave of fear reigned around when teachers and students experienced the shocks caused.

A meeting with staff and SMC members was called and a list of villagers who frequently deposited garbage was generated. The principal took the decision to write a letter to the “Sarpanch” in the neighbourhood village from where often the villagers were dumping the garbage. The letter was signed by teachers, students and SMC members. No action was taken.

A few months passed, and then a programme announced by Rajasthan Government --- “Government at your doorsteps”--- was launched as a big event with participation of the state ministers. The principal could manage to meet and invite one minister to the school. Despite that he was appraised with the problems, it still yielded no results. The principal by then realised the graveness of situation, but did not give up and shifted his attention to the last resort --- the media. And then the problem was acknowledged, administration took action and eventually it was resolved. The garbage and junk were cleaned and new road construction started behind the school wall.

***Learning:** The dynamic principal understands the root cause and transforms a decaying school into a lively place.*

Creating a Climate of Discipline

In situations of irregularities, uncertainties and non-seriousness of students and teaching staff, a planned strategy wherein leadership becomes more action oriented, proactive in taking timely decisions, and taking steps to make the staff accept and adapt to change.

Situation 5

Correcting Teaching Staff and Students

On joining a school, the principal observed that students and teachers are irregular and late comers to the school. When teachers are present in the school, there is hardly any teaching happening; most of the time is spent in gossiping. The constant irregularities have seriously hampered/affected learning in the school. The parents realised the criticality of situation; they have come to accept it. They believed that this education is not going to take their children far in getting a decent job and therefore, take children with them frequently to the agricultural fields to help them in their work.

The principal after understanding the severity, decided to take teachers to task first. The practice of deducting half day casual leave for late comers was initiated. As expected, reactions in the form of agitated statements started pouring in. The vice principal who was encouraging the late comers was taken to task. The situations aggravated when a teacher from disadvantaged sections started threatening the principal to file a case on the charges of harassment. Everyday the situation was becoming complex and environment tense. The principal remained cool and called the teacher for a dialogue. She felt that the principal was genuinely a thorough gentleman. Eventually she broke down and confided that it was the vice principal instigating her to file a

complaint against the principal. This was enough to take the teacher into confidence and influence all other teachers. The principal then worked on strategies with a purpose to generate in them the spirit of belongingness for the school and students. A meeting with teachers was called and out rightly a question was posed by the principal: “How would you like if your school is announced as an excellent school?”All unanimously showed enthusiasm and applauded. The principal then shared that this will be possible only if school results improve and students start learning and come to school regularly and on time.

This trigger was enough for teachers to start thinking about how their school could be made better. The first initiative came by calling a meeting with the parents. The parents were consulted on several issues concerning school improvement and officially Parent Teacher Association (PTA) was formed. Thereafter a sea change was seen in the behavior and regularity of teacher and student attendance. In a span of four years, the teachers and staff started taking work more seriously; students became more regular in studies. Admissions on the basis of written test increased four folds eventually resulting in improved results. The school has been organising sports events and other co-curricular activities as well. In fact the school became vibrant in all spheres thereby earning the recognition as one of the best one in the district.

***Learning:** Selling style helps when a principal handles immaturity and irresponsibility of experienced colleagues.*

Situation 6

Influencing Non-Serious Teachers

On observing irregularity of teachers for a week and the habit becoming more rampant, a notification was issued stating that the principal will be speaking instead of students the next day and all the teachers requested to attend the assembly. The notification clearly spelt out: “A few questions will be given to the teachers after the assembly to answer within 10 minutes. Whoever missed the speech will have to stay back after the classes for at least one hour to listen to the speech and complete the task.”

Next day the principal started his speech with a positive note by welcoming the teachers using metaphor being happy to speak in front all teachers and students. He stressed “Today is a special day for me, because we all are present today and everyone present itself is a big day for me. Did you see me some days sad?” The crowd murmured, “yes..yes”. He expressed the reason of sadness when teachers and students showed up in school late, or many absent and also when many go to class very late. Then he talked about the value of morning assembly, coming on time and leaving on time basically, punctuality. He concluded by sharing expectation she holds from every one and on everyday.

The principal then organized a meeting with teachers on the theme: “Punctuality”, where in a presentation was made by the principal mainly focussing on the importance of time and punctuality and how these two attributes contribute to a school’s progress and development. Giving the personal touch to the entire discourse, he encouraged the teachers to share their problems that inhibit them from reaching the school on time. The teachers were given time and space to come out with solution by dividing them into different groups.

Group-wise presentations were made. One group suggested the same school timings be followed but individual adjustments must be made based on the convenience of teachers. Second group suggested teachers and students coming late to school can be sent back. The last group suggested that the principal should be on time to welcome the teachers and students at the entrance school gate and when reporting time gets over, the gate must be locked. Finally, with a common consensus, the decision to have principal at the entrance to welcome children and teachers was taken, even to the extent of finalising the day when this practice would commence.

In a week's time, it was observed that all teachers and students started coming to school on time and perform their duties. One could see regularity in teacher and children attendance, timely and smooth functioning of the classes and the school and expansion in the learning time for children in the classroom settings.

Learning: *Becoming a role model and “walking the talk” genuinely helps.*

Resistance to change comes due to low motivation, low morale, and low self-esteem among the staff. There is a need to change the strong views they hold due to certain reasons and therefore do not show results. Most change sustains only when there is a transformation in the perceptions and opinions diverted to useful and meaningful ends.

Most of the in-school changes point to the initiatives taken by school principals based on the requirements of the school. The areas of change were identified and efforts taken in that direction. Some simple changes to the way a school operates can make a huge difference to the culture and environment of the organisation (Lasseby, 1998). Fullan (2002) recognises that most change is structural and superficial until the culture itself is transformed by changing the perceptions, values of people and the manner in which they work together. This calls for making multiple personal and professional needs of each team member compatible with the needs of the school to ensure growth of both simultaneously. In the profiles, this point was clearly reflected. Dunford and Bennett (2000) opined that the best leadership comes from a principal when the final decision is allowed to be taken by a team which shares a similar set of values and goals while each one of them is confident of equal value one holds. Then they challenge one another constantly till they reach a consensus. Wasserstein, Warnet & Klein (2000) explored, through a two-year empirical study, the relationship between the principal and his/her staff, on the one hand, and the process of change of perspective in innovation implementation, on the other. The study revealed that the principal's ability to change was partly due to his/her knowledge about how to deal with the interaction process and the image of change of deep-seated cultural meanings. In consonance to the profiles shared above, another point that became visible was that in order to improve or even change to improve, the school principal as a change leader decides on a particular direction a school ought to be led. Some of the lessons drawn are as below.

Work towards a shared vision involves those who are partners in bringing change, those who will be taking decisions and those who would benefit from the change.

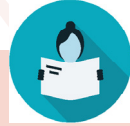
Considering the needs for change, initiate change, motivate and energise team members and promote team spirit, keeping equilibrium between personal and professional interests of each team member and the school.

Explore the possibility of collaborations with other partners and departments. The best option is to follow an inter-sectoral approach, education and health, education and civil society or non-governmental organisations if active in a particular location.

Transforming the school into a learning organisation requires the school to choose its own pathways of development in consonance with the ideas generated by the team themselves through a cyclic process of review, learning and improvement. School transformation system towards 'learning organisation' as observed by Katarzyna Ewa Potyrala, refers to people (teachers and learners) who participate in the process of changes ('be'), develop the ways of thinking ('know'), build strategic partnerships ('do') and have the motivation and capacity to learn ('learn'). Reflections and revisions of the developments inside the school attain a special significance. While consultation with the team forms the foundation, most of the in-school issues get addressed, providing a focus and in-built monitoring mechanisms coupled with open feedback becomes integral in the process of introducing change in any school system.

One has thus to anticipate change, get prepared and make all possible means to manage the situation. Managing change is simply not a set of recipes. The expectations from a school principal is more like a change leader who initiates, manages and sustains change through a well-defined course of action in order to bring a paradigm shift in the

school system. Here it is the attitude of the proactive principal that makes all the more difference in accepting, adapting and implementing the change process.



Exercise 5

Read the 6 situations given above.

Can you think of any similar challenge(s) in your school/situation?

What would be the strategy you would adopt to initiate change?

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Assessment: Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

- Q1. Change leadership is about
- becoming receptive to signals of change
 - moving strategically with consultation with team members
 - taking decisions based on proper understanding of context
 - opening new prospects within the possible means
 - All of the above
- Q2. Change influences school improvement. For change to lead towards school improvement, it is necessary that
- Strong views of staff causing low motivation should be changed
 - to encourage staff to understand others' perspective
 - Staff altogether works towards implementation of development plan having shared vision in mind
 - All of the above
- Q3. Leadership complexities in Indian schools arise due to which of the following?
- School size
 - Location
 - Context
 - All of the above

- Q4. To initiate change it is not necessary for principal/administrator to
- Ensure environment for change
 - Foster team work and good interpersonal relations
 - Promote positive communication
 - Ensure that opinions of most skilled staff members are considered while taking decision
 - Ensure that each social group is given equal opportunity to take part while taking decision
- Q5. Most of the challenges faced in school arise from implementation of
- Promotion of single social group
 - Lack of resources
 - Straight jacket policy
 - Lack of professional training for staff

Ans: Q.1-e, Q.2-d, Q.3-d, Q.4-d, Q.5-c







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