



Workshop Report: Introduction to Educational Leadership

The Workshop

Residential workshop on Introduction to Educational Leadership was held for sixty secondary school Head Masters from select districts in Andhra Pradesh (AP).

Dates: April 16-21 for Batch 1, April 17-22 for Batch 2

Venue: The School of Ancient Wisdom, Devenahalli, Bangalore.

Organizers: Arun Naik (Project Lead), Meghamala Nugehally, Nisha Butolia, Rajni Dwivedi (Vidya Bhavan), and M Sreenivas Rao.

Target Participants: A total of 60 participants, 5 from each district, were selected from different districts and were divided into two batches of 30 each. The average age of the group was 45.

Batch 1: AP Residential Schools, Chitoor, E. Godavari, Hyderabad, Vishakapatnam, Warangal.

Batch 2: Anantapur, Karimnagar, Kurnool, Mahbubnagar, Nelagonda, Srikakulam

The Program

The Head Master (HM) of a secondary school is considered a key resource of the Secondary School educational system. The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), the central governing body for Secondary education in India, whose aim is to achieve universal access and quality secondary education, is on a mission to train HMs in leadership and management of the school. A workshop on Leadership was organized in collaboration with Azim Premji University to introduce the concepts of School Leadership to a select group of HMs from different districts of Andhra Pradesh. This program is aimed at helping HMs look in to their potentials and share their experiences to address the challenges the school education system is facing today. The RMSA Director for AP, Shri. Dr. Satyanarayana and Shri. Ravi Sreedharan from Azim Premji Foundation provided the commencement address for the workshop.

The workshop commenced with perspectives on leadership which provided an overview of leadership qualities and the different types of leadership. This was followed by a session on the Quality Education Model (QEM), a model for understanding the educational machinery in the country, developed by the Azim Premji University. These first two days provided an overview of abstract concepts of leadership. The intent was to kindle in participants a sense of examining their role as HMs and encourage a spirit of self-discovery and accountability for their School. Participants were then exposed to Pedagogical principles of Math and Science using practical real life problems on the third day. Following this, on the fourth day, was a session on Classroom Observation and Teacher Support. These two days provided real life skills and techniques to deal with staff inefficiencies and provide pedagogical guidance to teachers. The fifth day was a lecture on Constitutional Values and the Role of School. A philosophical debate during this session ignited a sense of proprietorship amongst HMs for the children of their school and community. The final hour of the fifth day included a session on Learning Languages which the HMs found extremely useful. This along with the earlier Math and Science labs served as examples of Activity Based Learning. The final day provided a climactic practical experience for participants through the School Mapping exercise in terms of learning how to take stock of school inventory and also involve stakeholders and community as responsible owners of the local School.

The workshop concluded on the sixth-day with participants feeling content that they had learnt a few management and leadership techniques. They carried back many readings distributed during

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the sessions and also copies of the Leadership edition of the Learning Curve magazine, a quarterly published by the Azim Premji University. Characterized by high activity and a spirit of inquiry and examination brought about by philosophical discussions on Education, the Workshop offered a first glimpse into School Leadership. The participants hope to go back to their schools and apply the methodologies they learnt to their school situations while continuing to seek guidance from us.

Analysis

The workshop was a career changing program for many of the HMs who are relatively young into their role. For many other seasoned HMs it provided inspiration to continue to work towards their educational ideals. The workshop challenged the status quo in the attitudes of HMs and hence some felt stumped by the transition that they were expected to make.

The program was designed such that abstract concepts were conveyed first and then followed by instructions on specific skills and techniques. This left the participants very unhappy for the first few days of the workshop since they were unable to grasp this style of training. Expectations were not set ahead in the very start of the workshop. Context was also missing for the HMs as we failed to extract their current situation and challenges. But daily debriefing sessions by the organizers provided continuous honest review every day which we were able to incorporate into subsequent days and achieve real-time improvements to our program.

Conclusion

Children are extremely capable and curious and all children acquire knowledge and many capabilities on their own. Our responsibility as citizens is to ensure that this learning is sustained and enhanced through their secondary school years into adulthood. Secondary education in India has a long way to go. Challenges abound in infrastructure, curriculum and pedagogy, teacher qualification, teacher motivation and Head Master capability. Out of these, Head Master capability is perhaps the most key to the success of a school imparting quality education and this perhaps is also the least understood and explored aspect of school management and child development. The concept of Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) is an acknowledged area of engagement and development globally for the improvement of schools and hence overall child development. The workshop on Introduction to Leadership, a pioneering program in ELM developed by the Azim Premji Foundation, provided HMs a glimpse of leadership qualities and basic tools and methodologies to begin working towards betterment of their schools. This was only a start to the long road ahead. Advanced level of engagement is now required to ensure the scaling of the program and for providing mentoring and guidance to HMs to take on the practical task of school improvement.

Follow up Discussions

1. Follow-up on-site mentoring for School Improvement Projects
2. Workshop for another 450 Head Masters in AP
3. Developing Master Facilitators in the Government System (including some of the people who attended our program) to deliver programs themselves
4. Support for strengthening the Principals of the Model Schools being started this coming academic year across AP
5. Workshop or a visioning exercise for all senior educational functionaries in the Govt. of AP on the role and relevance of ELM in Education