EDUCATION AT CROSSROADS: CHALLENGES FACED BY HEADS OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (SCHOOLS)

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the various challenges faced by the Heads of educational institutions. It puts light on the main challenges faced by the heads of the institutions. Globalization and advancements in the social, technological, economic and political landscape make it imperative for us to acquire new ways of thinking and develop new concepts of perceiving realities. In the field of education the changes are very fast. Therefore to keep pace with the fast changing scenario the heads of the educational institutions need to be very alert and updated. The most important challenges faced by the heads of educational institutions are first execution of the curriculum, secondly managing skills of teaching staff and continuously updating the same to make them capable of handling students in today's age and lastly the students who are the future of tomorrow.

This paper discusses the various strategies used by the head of the educational institutions to overcome above mentioned challenges and potentially convert them into opportunities. This paper is also an attempt to draw the reader's attention to the factors both internal and external that are currently acting as a deterrent to the facilitation of a good quality education system.

The study further points out to the high pressure, large expectations and difficult challenges that characterize the job of a Head of an educational institution, yet they face these situations and find innovative solutions to address these issues. Thus it is necessary to provide them with the freedom and support so that they achieve wonders in the field of education.

Educational Institutions or Schools are the foundation for the education system to transfer knowledge and transform the student into a responsible citizen of our nation. But the bigger challenge is to make teaching and learning effective in such a manner that it creates a strong foundation for students to build and bring about a positive impact on the society at large. The responsibility of bringing this great change lies with the leader, as head of the educational institution he needs to be the bridge that minimizes the gap between teaching methodologies and student learning effectiveness.

Keywords: Heads, Challenges, Curriculum, Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, skillful execution and constant monitoring. It represents the wise choice of many alternatives.

Globalization and advancements in the social, technological, economic and political landscape make it imperative for us to acquire new ways of thinking and develop new concepts of perceiving realities. In the field of education the changes are very fast. Therefore to keep pace with the fast changing scenario the heads of the educational institutions to be very alert and updated.

So now it is time as the Heads of the institutions should initiate the change from the vast array of educational challenges.

Research Methodology

The research is secondary in nature. It is preliminary but further research can be taken up in this topic. The secondary data have been collected from various sources like internet, reference books, publications, magazines and newspapers.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the challenges faced by the heads of the educational institutions.

2. To suggest the strategies in which the heads can cope with the challenges they face in the processes of their career.

Challenges Faced By Heads of the Institution

What are the main criteria's that define an institution? The three pillars or the strength of an educational institution are **curriculum, teachers and students.** Usually the most important challenges faced by heads of the institutions are also the same.

Curriculum

Curriculum is ever changing but it is constant at a given point of time. After several iterations it has been standardized for the common good. It is up to us to transmit the curriculum in the best possible way to the students irrespective of the boards

1. **Skill based Education**

    Our education system is geared towards teaching and testing knowledge at every level as opposed to teaching skills. Give a man a fish and you feed him one day, teach him how to catch fishes and you feed him for a life. I believe that if you teach a man a skill you enable him for a life time, Knowledge is largely forgotten after the semester is over still year after year we focus on cramming information; the best crammers are rewarded by the system. This is one of the fundamental flows of our system.

2. **Technology based education**

    The curriculum should allow the student to access teaching from anywhere in the globe and answer a question paper from anywhere in the world. In this way they become doers and not rote learners. Today you can attend a live class taught by a top professor of Harvard University online if you want, no matter which country you belong to..

3. **Value based Education**

    In today's fast faced competitive world man seems to have compromised on his values, integrity and character in a bid to earn material wealth. As a result we see extensive corruption, illegal activities, inhuman behaviour and immoral consumption which is slowly breaking the very structure of our society, nation and the world. Therefore there is an urgent need for value based education dealing specifically with human values to redesign the fabric of our education system. A child mind is like a soft clay and can be moulded to any desired shape, So this is the right time and age to impart value education so that the right impressions formed in the child's mind will guide him throughout his life. Such life will definitely be based on moral and just principles. This will avoid the rising problems like, Indiscipline, sex abuse drug abuse, suicides etc

Challenges of a head in Executing Curriculum:

Intention of the curriculum is not effectively defined. Effective environment, availability of resources, space management and seating arrangement are some of the challenges in a classroom for executing the curriculum

By the time the syllabus comes, it is time for the schools to open; the teachers get little or no time to internalize the changes. This academic year there was a confusion regarding 5th std and 8th std syllabus (state board) Even two days before there was news in Times of India Schools, Colleges struggle to stick to academic schedule (unplanned Leave, holidays, Elections affect term calendar)

Doing everything in hurry for the sake of completing the syllabus, Registering and understanding of the syllabus does not happen amongst the students.

So children learn and forget post examinations and are not able to carry forward whatever they have   learnt.

Continuity is an issue the way the curriculum is designed today .The syllabus should be well connected across the classes, especially Grammar and mathematics, otherwise carrying forward by the students will be a problem. For example. What they are studying in 8th grade will not continue in 9th grade or there are chapters in 11th grade which is not continued in 12th grade. Application, Practical use of their knowledge and whatever they have learnt in school in everyday life.

A study by NGO Pratham shows that 31.7% of class 3 to 5 students can subtract and fewer than 30% of class 6 to 8 children can divide.

This is an embarrassing fact…Why is this happening to carry forward the concepts ahead post examination. Registering the concept in students and carry forward what they studied is an important problem of present educational system. Remedy or solutions for this problem is necessary.

Teacher

Teacher as a link/medium between curriculum and students. Teacher plays a very crucial role

Teaching Job until today regarded as safe, well paying, risk free and low pressure jobs. Once a teacher told in the class" well if you guys don't study it is entirely your loss .I will get my salary at the end of the month any way "He could not put across the lack of incentive for being good at teaching any better. Thousands of terrible teachers are wasting valuable time of young children Per se…We need leaders in teaching, not salaried people trying to hold on to their mantle? Remember the teachers job is going to be at stake….The days are not far …Students are going to get the freedom to attend the lecture they want to attend…So if the teachers are not updated, or no passion towards the profession.no leadership qualities, and ownership, or not a role model to others to follow is going to be out of the system…

What is the Role of a teacher?

- A Teacher should constantly update and stay relevant with the syllabus.
- Effective communication is the essence of teaching. A Teacher should be able to communicate about the subject being taught clearly and effectively. Now we have an example for effective communication

- A Teacher is a mentor for the students and a facilitator for their ambitions. S/he should be approachable.
- A teacher has to be inspirational and a good role model. Rarely we hear I want to be a teacher like
- A Teacher is an organizer of activities.
- A teacher should create an environment which excites learning amongst the students.

"If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow"-John Dewey

Challenges of an Institutional head in managing teaching staff

- Keeping the teaching staff highly motivated for them to perform effectively.
- Motivating the teaching staff to upgrade their skills. Relate to them their short comings
- Imbibing in them a sense of ownership. My school, my student…
- Go an extra mile accomplish their tasks
- Making them to understand Children will be children if all the children are well behaved and disciplined there will be no challenges to them.
- Giving teachers the fact that,. Its not merely being the first or best in the field of activity but it is the capacity to lift overall performance beyond the average keeping ahead of the dynamic changes in the society

Students as promise

The Purpose of schooling is to prepare them for higher education Help students identify their interests and abilities. Prepare them to be global citizens. Most importantly we need to remember that it is the process of drawing out the best to develop character or mental powers. "The Illiterate of 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn"

To create a culture of community where students learn to support one another and take responsibility of the well-being of one another and of the total community.

Teach students who are functioning at many different levels of ability.

Access student skills and learning styles to facilitate learning and personal experience.

And Holistic development of a student. Or when the student leaves the school after fourteen years he/she should be a complete individual who is ready to face the world outside.

Challenges Encountered with students

These are not challenges usually faced in this school per se, but these are challenges we face, hear or read in the newspapers, across schools.

The students are not sequestered from the ever changing social environment. Their behavior reflects the behavior of the society. This is fuelled by the internet revolution, long hours of using Television, Social media network and omnipresent mobile for their companionship. All this has an effect of the students losing their span of attention. We heard of instances that students left home but not reached school or vice versa. Gone to meet virtual friends, friends they met on face book.

Another a very important issue we are facing is coaching classes and tie ups of coaching classes

This leads absenteeism and lack of attention in classroom.

Benefits & Opportunity
Curriculum:
Putting forth the ideas of curriculum in an interesting manner leads to better understanding in students resulting in higher rate of carrying forward the concepts for varied application in real life. The purpose of the curriculum is met and through application of the curriculum in the society where a national agenda has transpired to a local asset.

Teacher:
The teacher benefits as a team leader by managing many groups of students during their career.
The teacher contributes to the society beyond the borders of the school, by commitment and by updating their knowledge every chance they get.
Allowing creative freedom to teachers in deciding the method of expressing the curriculum, allows for greater involvement and deeper knowledge of the subject, thus invoking commitment and higher motivation.

Students:
Through value education students campaign against the very vices that they might be a victim off.
They learn to focus by engaging/resolving adverse situations and also develop interpersonal and leadership skills
Students learn life skills. They learn to respect different abled peers and people no matter what jobs they do.
We have three important challenges to be addressed.

Strategies to overcome Challenges
Incorporating certain strategies we can strengthen the three pillars of the school by
1. Bracing the school from external factors and addressing them in the academic discourse.
2. Making the school an important medium to broadcast social messages.
3. Providing the student with sound fundamentals so that can become confident individuals.

Each child is different. We need strategies to reaffirm the purpose of schooling
1. To give the power of choice to students and offer flexibility in a set curriculum.
2. To imbibe life skills that could be instrumental in their growth.
3. To enable achievement of personal goals with respect to their interest and abilities.

CONCLUSION
"At times we fail to find solution for our challenges, but those solutions are very much around us. Our creativity can help us reach those solutions"
- **Sukant Ratnakar, Open the windows: To the world around You**

Hence it is important to create a robust academic ecosystem complete with values and relevant knowledge in our schools so that we can influence our neighborhood, cities and country at large. A good leader is one who has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do and make them to like it"

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