

School Leadership- from Vision to Practice: Untying the Knots for Integration of EWS Children

“The only Difference between Successful and Unsuccessful People is Extraordinary Determination”

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Abstract

School leaders, specifically the school head, have a crucial role to play in establishing goals, fostering a healthy school climate that includes the proactive school mindset, and fostering essential staff enthusiasm and dedication that are necessary for success even in difficult situations. This paper is based on the case study of a school where the principal took the bold step of integrating students from Economically Weaker Section (EWS) families into the school. EWS children suffer significant hurdles to integration, education, and learning because of poverty and social marginalisation. Inequality in learning achievement is a problem that is particularly evident in children from economically disadvantaged families, and they are exacerbated by their social and familial disadvantages. They are known as the “children at the bottom of the pyramid” because they are frequently forgotten and are often left behind. Within this context, the author in this paper has described the practices adopted by the school head that aimed at improving learning and equity amongst the most disadvantaged children. The paper points out that a principal’s leadership style can impact the integration of the EWS learners, learning outcomes, and instructional objectives—with examples specifically related to the Indian context. The paper discusses some caveats associated with standards-based education systems and concludes with suggestions for improvement and implementation.

Keywords: Standards-based system, Competency-based education, Standards, Learning outcomes, NEP 2020

Introduction

It is believed that behind any great organisation there is a great leader, and schools are no exception. A school head’s duty should be to provide leadership, direction, and coordination within the school and among all the stakeholders. Principals are expected to be always visible, meet students, parents, and teachers, address problems and deal with a variety of situations directly, and

represent the school. A successful school leader balances all these responsibilities while maintaining his or her primary obligation as the school’s instructional leader. School principals are expected to fulfil many tasks. They are expected to be academic, administrative/ personnel and financial managers. All these aspects are not mutually exclusive of each other and thus there exists a lot of overlapping in their roles and responsibilities. The CABE Committee

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on Universalisation of Secondary Education (2005) also highlights that heads of schools hold the key to quality management and self-renewal of schools. It points out that managing and leading schools is a specialised job and not merely an automatic extension of activities of a teacher. The role of principal becomes crucial, as they give the school the direction and standards to be ensured. They maintain close liaison with all stakeholders of the school, including parents and students. Hence, collection of real time information and processing the same for timely decision making becomes smooth and effective.

A school that has "strong instructional leadership", "clear and focused mission", "safe and orderly", "regular monitoring of student development", "good home-school relationship", and "opportunity to learn" is an effective school (Nyagosia and others, 2013). Without effective leadership or guidance, the entire plan or organisation will fail. Under the leadership, three things are critical: making decisions, declaring those decisions, and implementing those decisions.. Educational leadership in a school can thus be defined as the process of coordinating the activities of school personnel, such as teachers, students, and their parents, while utilising relevant materials, such as the school, property, and so on. It is carried out in such a way as to successfully foster the development of human traits as anticipated by philosophy based on socialism, secularism, and democracy. It is concerned with the development of students and school workers (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee 1982; Hallinger and Heck 1996; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008). As a result, leadership is a goal-setting job that establishes the policies and areas of the institution to achieve the desired results.

A vision for their school, university, institution, or organisation is essential for educational leaders. Educational leaders are held to a variety of standards (Bush and Glover, 2014). He or she may be expected to be a strong hands-on leader who points others in the right direction in some situations,

but in others, they may be expected to be more collaborative. They may necessitate collaborative planning and visioning with all stakeholders" (Schleicher, 2012). The school head must be able to communicate effectively and have the patience to listen to everyone who approaches them. The postcapitalist society is fundamentally an information capitalism-based civilisation. Instead of manufacturing and distributing products, the industries at the heart of the economy are those that produce and distribute knowledge. Figure 1 depicts the complexities connected with Educational Leadership.

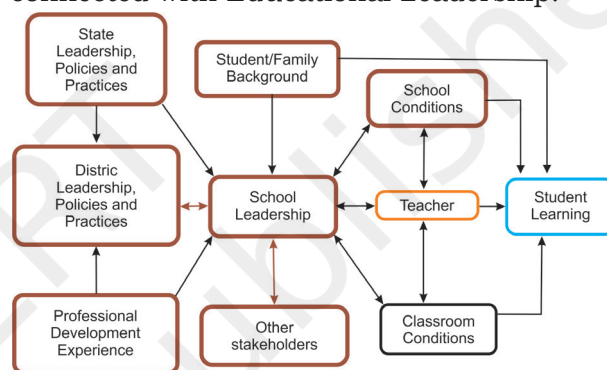


Figure – 1.1

Source: Louis, Karen Seashore (2015) Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, linking leadership to learning: State, District and Local Effects

Curriculum and other school matters must be understood by school leaders. They must relate staff development to educational advancement. As school leaders, they must act as "teachers of teachers", diagnosing educational issues, coaching teachers, and reviewing and correcting the pedagogical work of their colleagues. In this view, leadership is multifaceted, combining management, human, and educational abilities (Wiles and Bondi, 1996). The numerous difficulties and concerns in school education can be addressed by principals in their capacity as school leaders.

Like the stratifications in Indian society, the stratifications in the educational system can be clearly seen. Class plays a significant role in who has access to high-quality education; typically, upper, and

middle-class families send their children to private, unaided schools that charge substantial tuition fees. Amidst this scenario, quality education remains elusive for the children from EWS families. This has significantly impeded the process of equitable development of all sections of the society. Against this backdrop, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 mandated that all private schools in India must set aside 25 per cent of their seats for students from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). The government would be covering these students' tuition costs up to the amount spent per child in the government schools. This was done to lessen the stratification in educational opportunities. Due to the EWS Quota, it became feasible for poor households to enroll their children in private schools, which would not be possible otherwise.

The idea of EWS Quota is to give poor and disadvantaged children access to high-quality education and give them the chance to integrate with more privileged children in society. But there are several challenges on this path as provision of mere quota is not enough. There are also concerns raised at times by other stakeholders that this provision of their integration will lead to the dilution of education quality for private schools. Though the RTE Act, 2009 does not require segregation of children in school, but the EWS children are at times compelled to get segregated in private schools under the EWS Quota due to financial, social, and other constraints. These students face social integration issues after they begin classes. Either the parents of EWS students are not educated or are not able to contribute more in terms of learning and knowledge whereas there are more children in the class whose parents are educated and can help them. The social, economic, and psychological barriers of these learners also must be taken into consideration and remedial measures need to be planned accordingly. In many ways the school principals can play an important role in meeting these challenges. There are

several research evidence that support this. A Wallace Foundation research (2013) supports that the principal as a school leader can play an effective role in integrating the learners of diverse background in the school. As per the research good principals excel at five crucial tasks: creating a vision for all students' academic success, establishing conditions favourable to education, fostering others' leadership qualities, enhancing education, managing personnel, information, and procedures to promote academic advancement. As per Leithwood and Riehl (2003), "Principals must adapt to increased variety in student characteristics, including cultural background and immigration status, income inequities, physical and mental disabilities, and variation in cognitive capacities". In order to increase the acceptability and adaptability of the EWS Quota learners and their integration in the school, it is strategically necessary to address the various concerns among stakeholders as well as the financial constraints of the learner. The school principal can play a significant role in creating an environment in which the EWS students can be integrated.

Rationale of the Study

In numerous policy documents, the promotion of equal access to high-quality education free from prejudice and inequities has been repeatedly reaffirmed. The availability of EWS Quota has allowed the economically underprivileged children to get admission to private schools, which they would not have been able to do otherwise. The idea of EWS Quota is to give poor and disadvantaged children access to high-quality education and give them the chance to integrate with more privileged children in society. However, there have been several issues in integration of EWS learners. For instance, Sarin and Gupta (2013) and Mehendale, Mukhopadhyay and Namala (2015) have claimed that the school administrators' perception that students from the weaker sections came from disadvantaged backgrounds significantly

impacts efforts to include them and violates their dignity and rights. The doubts of the planners and implementers regarding the feasibility of achieving social inclusion through the provision of free seats is reiterated by Srivastava and Noronha (2014) as well.

Two recent large-scale studies from the United States (Karen Seashore Louis et al, 2010) and England (Christopher Day et al, 2009) demonstrate the importance of school principals in influencing the efficacy of schools through a wealth of empirical evidence. Principals have the freedom to choose how learning frameworks (class structure, ability within the school, etc.) will be implemented, as described in "Principals," published by Resh & Dar (2011). In this book the authors shared the Israel's integration experience and described that their (principals') views and assumptions about the success of integration have an impact on inclusive practices adopted in school.

When children from different socio-economic situations are accepted into the same school and receive an education together, the role of the school head becomes crucial. The current research work is grounded in a case study that attempts to reflect on the efforts made by school head to integrate the EWS students. It is important to comprehend how did the school head mediate to accommodate their needs, as well as negotiated with EWS students and parents to meet the school's educational requirements.

The current case study is an attempt to elucidate the transformation process that was brought about by a school leader in terms of integrating economically disadvantaged children and improving their academic achievements, as well as building healthy relationships between students, teachers, and school administration through the initiatives.

The case study will enable us to understand the strategies which the school head adopted in addressing student diversity in terms of their economic background thereby enabling

their integration. Considering this, firstly it would be interesting to study the many ways in which the private school's head responded to this condition and progressed towards the integration of the EWS learners. Secondly, there is also a need to understand the challenges faced by the teachers and parents over this initiative. The case study can lead us to know the extent to which the schools can play a facilitating role in responding to the diversity of students and easing the process of integration of EWS learners.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study were to examine:

- policies and real time practices adopted by school head in integrating the EWS learners
- initiatives taken in terms of community involvement and engagement
- kinds of issues and challenges that are faced by the school due to the integration of the EWS children

Methodology

The primary focus of this study was on the EWS children and the role of the principal in changing their schooling experiences so as to integrate them with the other children. Individuals' attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behavior, particularly those of the school principal, teachers, parents and children were explored and understood through open ended interviews. In-depth interviews with school principal helped in learning more about her perspectives and measures used by her to promote integration. To better understand how they deal with diversity in the classroom all the teachers who were teaching these EWS learners were also spoken with. During the data collection phase, a few Focused Group Discussions with teachers and parents were also conducted to learn their perspectives on integration of these children. The school began implementing this provision during the academic year 2004–05 (much before the RTE Act). A majority of these respondents were from the nursery,

kindergarten, and Grade 1 stages of the academic session 2006-07. All the teachers (N=13) and administrative staff (N=5) dealing with the children in these classes (nursery, kindergarten, and grade 1) were interviewed. In addition to these, 15 parents of non EWS children and 15 parents of EWS children were interviewed. 20 children of EWS category were interviewed. In all, 69 respondents were interviewed, including the principal, teachers, administrative staff, and children of these classes. As the children were extremely young, attempts were made to build a rapport with them and interview them several times depending on their capacity for articulating their response. In addition to this, the secondary source of data such as annual reports, school admission records and notifications/orders issued by the school authorities for integration of EWS learners were also analyzed to gain more insight. Extensive observations of the school were made during the period of 12 days of the academic session. Every class in which EWS children were enrolled was carefully observed. These observations were conducted at least three to four times. The school's records, reports and documents were thoroughly analysed to learn more about the policies and practices implemented by the principal.

Brief Profile of the School and its Students XYZ (name kept anonymous), one of the most prestigious schools in a North Indian state, is a 50-year-old institution. The school took satisfaction in upholding its founder's vision, which centered around the idea of bringing about awakening amongst marginalised youth. The school had taken numerous measures to empower economically disadvantaged students, and every attempt had been made to integrate them seamlessly into the school's mainstream. This school had already taken the lead and began on the mission to welcome these children before the State Administration made it essential to reserve a specific percentage of seats for the EWS children. The school took on the task of providing quality education and facilities

to students from low-income families and slums along with other students. A total of 39 children from the slums surrounding the school were chosen and admitted. When the terms of the RTE (Right to Education) were enacted later, it did not come as a surprise to them as the school had already integrated the EWS learners.

The Initial Experiences with Children after Admission

The School Authorities chose Surya Kiran as the name for this new addition (name changed). The Surya Kiran programme was named after the EWS children who participated in it. As per the teachers they found these children as a challenging and diverse group to manage. Most of them had no prior knowledge of personal hygiene or schooling. They couldn't even hold a pencil properly. Several of them were having difficulties at home, with no one to assist them with their homework as the parents were not educated and did not have time to attend to the children and they could not afford to have a tuition also. Many of their parents worked as manual labourers. They couldn't afford to feed their children properly. There were times when they arrived at school without having taken a bath due to a scarcity of water in their homes. Parents had to pay Rs. 5/- for a pail of water, which they could not afford. These were extremely distressing events.

The annual reports and notifications issued by the school indicate that the school equipped these children with uniforms, books, and stationery, and this started at the prep level and prepared them for a curriculum identical to that of pupils in ordinary KG classes. The teachers reported that it was initially a frustrating experience for them because the children's response was poor, and even the parents refused to cooperate. The children's behavior in school was influenced by their difficult home circumstances. The teachers stated that students mis behaved, used abusive

language and thefts and other incidents were prevalent, and investigation found that the causes were the lack of money at home, fathers' drinking habits, parental arguments, etc. The school principal informed that this was a sensitive issue. The situation was handled with great care. Parents were contacted and given advice during meetings with teachers. The teachers were specifically asked to deal with them with patience and love and this took a lot of time and eventually children began to adjust and learn. Another initiative that principals reported was that the children were promoted from class to class and given surrogate parenting by the parents /community members/teachers who volunteered for it and children were given extra evening catch-up lessons.

The principal informed that the experience and blunders taught her a lot. It was decided that for this programme to succeed, community awareness must be raised in the 'catchment region,' or the areas from which prospective students would join the school. It was also thought that assessing the attitudes of the children and their parents before admitting them was crucial.

Another key milestone was the decision, taken by the school principal at the time of initiation, to provide these children an additional year of training in personal hygiene, basic manners, and motor skills before admitting them to the KG programme. As a result, Class Prep — the tiniest of the little — was born. Prep was launched here, and it is currently the entry point for students accepted into this programme. The introduction of class Prep (Nursery) has aided these students in making a smooth transition to kindergarten.

Challenges and the Way Out

The school principal stated that she had her own share of challenges from time to time. This programme, too, was met with skepticism and criticism by the different stakeholders, such as parents, community, and the teachers. Many doubts and questions

were expressed about its chances of success. How could these children emotionally and cognitively adjust to the other children from the upper classes?

Wouldn't they develop a sense of inferiority?

Wouldn't communication be a difficulty because they didn't grow up speaking English?

Apart from this, other additional issues occurred, the most common of which was theft. These students come from a family where their parents couldn't afford to buy them the nice stationery that the other students carried to school. These children were enticed by such things, resulting in the stealing problem.

Some of them were also prone to using derogatory language, as they had seen their parents do at home. These students never had a structured schedule at home and were accustomed to doing whatever they pleased. It became difficult to get them to follow the rules and regulations, particularly the importance of punctuality.

As stated by teachers, some of them engaged in verbal and physical altercations. It needed a lot of patience and counselling to make them see the difference between right and wrong. Lack of nutrition was yet another aspect.

Another issue that occurred was that the Surya Kiran children lacked a support system at home to help them with their homework. They began to struggle with their academics, particularly with complex ideas in languages, math, and science.

One of the teachers stated that it was felt that the situation was quite difficult also because "these children did not even have a computer at home." The school was sending all circulars and notes to parents via email as it was ecofriendly. How will these children's parents read their emails?

Some of the community members associated with the management of the school raised concerns about the integration's impact on the class, asking, "What if other

children or their parents don't want it?"

Apart from these concerns, the principal reported that in the very beginning of the session the parents of mainstream children expressed reservations, if not outright hostility, to the idea of integrating the Surya Kiran children into the regular sections. They were concerned that these children might have a negative impact on their children. Parents requested that their children may not be seated with the Surya Kiran children because their children would learn all the wrong things. There was initial discontent among some parents as they saw integration measure as a means of protecting the interests of the EWS children who were being integrated.

Another worrisome element was the attitude of the teachers, who were hesitant to accept the responsibility of teaching the Surya Kiran children. Only a few teachers were chosen to educate these youngsters year after year in the beginning. The school principal stated that, the teachers reported that EWS children were quiet in class and not very receptive as they were not fluent in English medium. In the Prep class level the bilingual teaching strategy was adopted, and the students were taught in English and Hindi. The children who hesitated in responding in English and instead they were asked to respond in Hindi when asked about their name, class, etc. The teachers reported that as a result, their interactions intensified and the environment became more positive, children eventually lost their inhibitions. Some EWS children also performed exceptionally better than other students, in fact while responding to the teacher's questions.

The school principal specified that a series of orientations were organised for the teachers. The teachers were asked to communicate with the parents in Hindi, reach out to them to help them understand circulars, and provide other necessary home support. The teachers were asked to make sure that no groups were formed in the class and that there was an optimistic

learning environment. The school adopted the practice of seat rotation for this reason through sporadic weekly rotation of seats. The EWS children were given the chance to sit next to the non-EWS children. Their potential was not only tapped via academic excellence but also through extracurricular and athletic activities. Principal informed that some of the EWS students had a variety of interests, notably in athletics because they were more resilient. This gradually brought a transformation in the attitude of teachers towards them also. As a result, everyone got accustomed to the concept, the pattern changed, and integration of these children became seamless.

Celebration of Birthday: Students had a stage fear and to eradicate that fear birthday celebration in prayer assembly were started. Those who had birthdays were especially congratulated, and their birthdays were commemorated by announcing their names, giving them pens and notebooks, and urging them to pray in morning assembly. The school encouraged these students to read the news and lead the prayer in morning assembly. The principal stated that it was noticed that this gradually brought a very positive impact on children, helped them to remove stage fear and build their confidence in public speaking.

Book Bank: One of the teachers was given the charge of book bank, he collected books from outgoing students and kept them safe so that they could be used for next session.

Co-curricular Activities: The principal stated that the energies of these children were channelized effectively by involving them in co-curricular activities. Involving these children in extracurricular activities is an excellent method to steer their enthusiasm. Some of the students were very talented. Their talents in dance, acting, art, music, and other areas earned them praise and appreciation from their peers. As a result, these Surya Kiran youngsters were in high demand whenever a co-curricular activity or competition was declared. Varied group activities sprung up to provide more

opportunity for youngsters from various socio-economic levels to connect in a healthier way. With each passing year, the outreach programme grew stronger, more positive, healthier, and children also became more confident.

The teachers informed that the school head was able to approach problems and come up with creative solutions. Positive initiatives such as the annual fete, class canteens, and many more were unique initiatives. These helped to raise awareness of the needs and aspirations of those who belonged to the less privileged class while also doing something constructive to aid them. These actions helped raise finances and made a significant contribution to the outreach programme. These items helped them meet the stationery, uniform, and nutrition needs of the Surya Kiran youngsters (milk and bananas). The principal stated that these students were encouraged to take part in all the activities. With the capable direction of teachers, students excelled in many competitions, whether it was a quiz, declamation, art competition, or science display. Teachers informed that they used to establish daily plans for school activities. The principal's usual work was to go around the school twice a day, and during spare time, she would take the class and randomly check assignments provided by the teachers. She used to interact with students on a variety of academic and non-academic activities, which enabled her to identify their issues and provide assistance where necessary.

Changing the Mindset of Parents:

Changes were implemented gradually but strongly. Parents were made aware of the problem and encouraged to think rationally about it. Every child, regardless of his or her social or economic circumstances, has the right to education. Several programmes have been implemented to raise awareness among children and their parents about the importance of educating these children. At the time of admission, the notices and forms on display made it

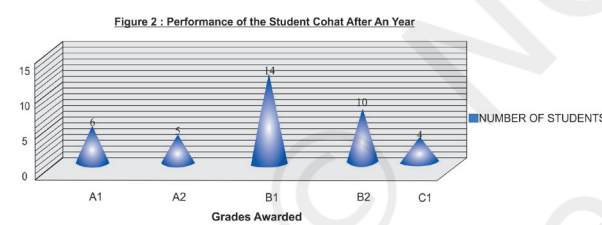
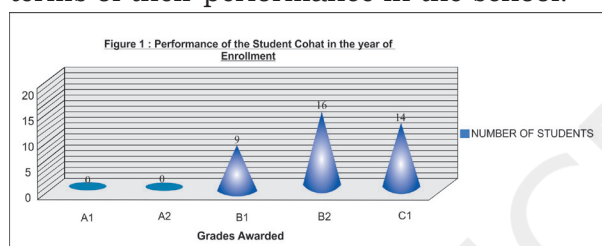
obvious that the Surya Kiran children would be integrated into the mainstream and that only those parents who were okay with the idea should apply. Parents began inviting these children to the birthday parties of their children gradually.

With the passage of time, even the teachers developed a positive outlook and changed their attitude. A very motivating factor was the recognition of the efforts of the teachers who had taught the classes having Surya Kiran children. Their efforts were acknowledged and lauded. These teachers spoke about their experiences and the emotional moments they had faced. Their positivity and sensitivity moved many hearts, and the transformation became apparent.

Performance of Students Academic performance of these children was not very good in the first year of their schooling. Above all neither the students nor their parents paid attention to studies. It was difficult for students to catch up in English medium, and the school head felt helpless with perception that no one can change the situation. As regards the lack of a support structure at home was concerned, rays of hope once again showed the path in the darkness. A novel idea was envisaged. The children from the higher classes were approached to volunteer to help these children after school hours. Apart from being provided help in the form of free books, stationery, daily nutritional needs (in the form of milk and bananas) and highly subsidised uniforms, the older students in the senior wing assisted these students by providing academic support. This concept of enlisting the support of older students gave birth to the "Big Buddy" Programme, another innovative idea from the School Head. These older students began creating unique and relevant Big Buddy worksheets to assist students in comprehending, revising, and solving difficult ideas, allowing them to better comprehend.

The school head informed that the 'Big Buddy' Campaign was an exceptional part of their outreach programme. Senior wing students interacted with and offered

assistance to the economically weaker section children. After school, they devoted an hour to leading, assisting, and instructing the Surya Kiran children. The bonding between the mainstream and Surya Kiran children became evident especially with their senior wing big buddies. This programme helped in developing the emotional quotient of the other students at the school, i.e., of the senior wing students who rendered their help to the EWS children. They were the buddies to these young ones. The data (Figure 1 & Figure 2) for the result of the performance of the children in the year of enrollment and the succeeding year for the same cohort of students shows that there was much improvement in the students in terms of their performance in the school.



Talking to some of the Surya Kiran children about how they felt being a member of the XYZ school was the greatest method to determine whether their progress was in the correct direction and bearing fruits. Did they feel welcome? One of them said something like this:

- Q. Can you tell me about your experience at this school?
- A. This institution has shaped who I am. It has provided me with the opportunity to pursue my goal.
- Q. How has attending XYZ school benefited you?

- A. I can live with pride, hold my head high, and confidently face the world.
- Q. Do you have any special memories?
- A. I remember all those teachers who prompted, encouraged, pushed, and even scolded me. They never gave up their faith in me and made this journey possible.
- Q. Have you ever felt discriminated against by your classmates or teachers?
- A. On the contrary, they have always aided and supported me. Our teachers are exceptional. We were always given equal treatment. Teachers went above and above to accommodate us and solve our concerns.
- Q. What else about this school appeals to you?
- A. Sports equipment, computers, and music. This level of exposure would never be possible anywhere else.
- Q. What are your hopes and dreams?
- A. I'd like to take the I.A.S. examination.

The success of this programme in the Junior Wing led to its introduction in the Senior Wing too. However, in the Senior Wing, it was decided that there will be no big buddy programme and only teachers conducted the extra classes after the school hours, the afternoon classes. To ensure the smooth operation of this programme, the weekly duties of the teachers were rotated. Principal expressed that the teachers' engagement in extra classes for these students in the senior wing made this programme more effective and meaningful since they were able to provide appropriate direction and support as needed. Furthermore, the children did better under their supervision. Even the wealthiest parents began sending their children to these classes.

The school head managed to take challenges in its stride and came up with innovative ways to meet them confidently. Community contributed to every function organized by school and in developing infrastructure.

Initiatives of Adult Education

The school head went above and beyond to give the greatest possible education for its EWS pupils by reaching out to their parents. Experts from the National Literacy Mission (NLM) were called upon for help and support. Their guidance proved to be quite helpful when they hosted a training for their instructors and demonstrated the proper technique to teach EWS parents. They assisted and led teachers through the numerous procedures involved in educating adults (parents of EWS children) who had never attended a school before. This was visualised by the school head as an essential step in helping the children live with dignity, since it taught their parents the importance of education in each person's life.

The principal informed that the adult education classes were started on a regular basis. KG and prep teachers were entrusted with the responsibility to devote morning and afternoon time to the keen and interested parents. Once again, the stationery and notebooks were provided to them and the textbooks provided by NLM were used as a guide to proceed firmly and confidently on this path of enlightening the less privileged ones. Teachers taught the parents sincerely and diligently and parents too took it up as a challenge. Gradually a bond of love, affection and respect developed between the teachers and parents. The efforts of teachers bore fruit and they had a confident set of parents who very proudly were able to sign their names instead of using their thumb impression.

The teachers stated that in a very touching ceremony, the school head honoured the parents who had been punctual and regular in the adult education classes. She expressed gratitude to the parents for their participation and praised their tenacity and perseverance. Small tokens of appreciation were distributed in this ceremony and their school head always assured the parents of constant support and love. Now, these same parents serve as resource people who

motivate the other parents to join the Adult Education Programme – widening ripples in the pool of education.

Conclusion

Mainstreaming of EWS children to a large extent depends on the environment these children are exposed to. Various kinds of efforts were made by the School Head for the integration of EWS children by the way of their social inclusion and keeping in view their economic background. There were initially several apprehensions that prevailed around the integration of the EWS children. There were a number of challenges arising out of the social, economic, and psychological barriers of EWS children such as the deficient home environment, uneducated parents, lack of resources. These were taken into consideration and remedial measures as well as school policies were planned by the school head accordingly. The policies adopted by the principal helped the school to negotiate with the diversities arising out of the integration of EWS children in the classroom. The various apprehensions among stakeholders at different levels as well as the financial constraints were strategically dealt with in order to improve acceptability and adaptability of the EWS children. Introduction of bilingual medium of instruction at the prep level helped in facilitating not only the two-way communication but also confidence level of the learners. The introduction of support in the form of Big Buddy programme at the junior level, encouragement of the students to participate in extra-curricular activities helped them in learning new skills and gaining confidence, and creating their acceptance among the stakeholders. The changes were implemented gradually by the way of outreach programmes for the community, parents, and orientation of the teachers, but forcefully. Parents were made aware of the issue and encouraged to consider it rationally.

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