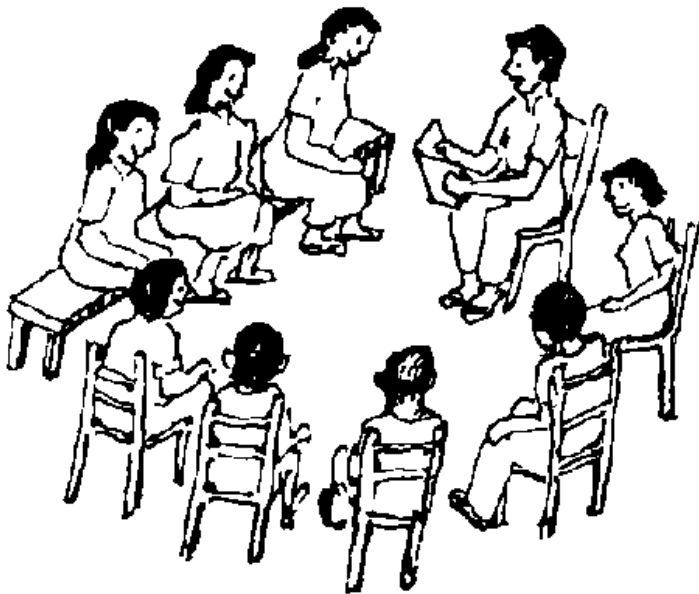


*Abba. says it all, and so did Martin Luther King Jr.*

Every effective teacher has a dream. Every successful scientist has a dream. Every businessman has a dream. If you don't start with a dream, you can't cope with reality. But with a dream, you can cope with anything.

I would like to think of ideal school leadership as being the start of a good dream. After all, every school is as successful as its leadership. The ideal school leadership provides dreams based on reality and takes the child, the parents, and the teachers – the whole school family - to the objective, which is happiness, fulfillment and success. The ideal school leader



realizes that in his school each child and each teacher is an individual. Each individual has his strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, each individual has expectations and an ideal leadership provides the encouragement and the wherewithal to achieve the expectations.

Is this at all possible in a large school of many teachers and over a thousand children? Many years ago there were perhaps twenty five or thirty children per class. Today, it is more than likely that there are over fifty children, in a cramped classroom with only one teacher and very little space for activity. In days of yore a school had a playground, singing classes, extra music for those who were gifted, the annual school play, Christmas bazaars and a sports festival. The children had plenty of diverse activities and a wealth of experiences which were interesting, exciting and

challenging.

There are busy people who are involved and interested in a great many things. Such people usually have time for yet another interest because their time management skills make them energetic, healthy and full of beans. Unfortunately, there are many who are talented, do precious little and “have no time” because they are “too busy”.

In my dream the ideal school leadership focuses on 10 essential points:

1. Whole School Happiness – This is an idea mooted by John “Mr. Chips” Mason. I thought it was a brilliant idea



*In days of yore a school had a playground, singing classes, extra music for those who were gifted, the annual school play, Christmas bazaars and a sports festival.*



because I have always felt that you can judge how good a school is by the happiness quotient that you can see and feel around you. It is something we learnt in psychology at training college: “A happy child learns faster – and loves it.”

2. The ideal school is represented by a triangle in which each component of the school has a role to play – the Head, the Staff and the Home. At the centre of the triangle is the VIP – the Child.
3. Ideally the leadership will look for a school that provides outdoor spaces for climbing, running, cycling, walking, nature and all manners of creativity (a tree house? a paddling pool? a sand pit? gardening? a jungle gym? You're dreaming again, Ayesha!)
4. The Classroom. We are not in the business of interior decoration but in the business of learning. And a school



thrives when learning is exciting and every moment provides discovery, experience and a chance to explore. Every inch of space is put into use: the window sill and lots of soft board, a book corner, a nature table and a home corner. Please note that these need not be confined to nursery and kindergarten classes. The nature table at the lower levels of the school can be just as interesting as those at Class 7 and 8, where nature and science begin to take proper shape.

A home corner gives the four-year-old a chance to assume an adult role; but the older child can learn

*When we think of evaluation we usually think of children's reports and various ways of proclaiming the child's success or lack of it. Good leadership evaluates the school as a whole, and gives each member of the school family a chance to have her/his say on the school program and its success.*

carpentry or cooking as part of a home-maker's hobby.

A class which has under 30 children has a lucky teacher, but as Sr. Cyril once said, “large classes are here to stay, so find a way to cope with the numbers.” Group methods of teaching are the only way, and so the arrangement of classroom furniture will make way for easy movement between groups for both teacher and pupils.

Color is an important feature in any workplace, and has a lot to do with the weather, the ventilation and natural light. There are hot colors and cool colors, colors that soothe and colors that calm. The safest color to use on the walls is white or cream because then you can go to town with what you put on your soft boards or even what colors you paint your furniture. (Thank goodness for days of washable paint and BLUE TACK!).

5. Activity methods are a must because good school leadership believes and understands in learning by doing. Learning by heart will never be tolerated in a

good school.

6. My Dream Leader has a clear concept of education.
  - (i) Making the most of the world around us.
  - (ii) Learning to think, to solve problems and find solutions
  - (iii) Having a facilitator close at hand to suggest and encourage – and to keep quiet when required!
7. Much is spoken of freedom and my dream leadership will provide freedom, which is not licensed. Freedom of choice, freedom to work at one's own pace, freedom to choose what attracts one personally instead of “everyone has to have two blue windows and one red door”.
8. Good leadership will ensure good teaching, because it will constantly provide guidance, workshops, discussions and time for personal solutions to problems that may occur in any teacher's life. The leadership learns how to use tact and good manners to advantage so that someone who needs to be told where she is going wrong does not feel she is at an inquisition.
 

Incidentally, such workshops and discussions should also be part of the leadership program for the principal and even the governing body. I will never forget the time a local principal in Kolkata came to a TTC refresher course that was offered by the Teachers' Center and declared that age was no bar. Here was a leader who had not stopped learning, saw the value of refreshing himself and found the time to join others who were not in such an exalted position as he was. It made us all feel good.
9. Parents are an all important part of the school family. Gone are the days when curt notices said “Parents may not come beyond this point”. Today, in an ideal school, parents are part of the school and can contribute time and expertise to further any particular interest in the school curriculum.
10. Every good effort needs a regular friendly review, where we can sum up the out-and-out successes, the ideas that went slightly amiss or the effort that needs repetition. When we think of evaluation we usually think of children's report and various ways of proclaiming the child's success or lack of it. Good leadership evaluates the school as a whole, and gives each member of the school family a chance to have her / his say on the school

program and its success.

Is this a dream? I don't think so. It takes time, effort, sincerity

and honesty to achieve the dream in full measure. But we will never achieve anything if we don't review what we have done. I'm talking about constructive criticism.

***“To avoid criticism***

***Say nothing,***

***Do nothing and***

***Be Nothing”***

**My ideal dream leadership  
would never find themselves  
in that position!**



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**Ayesha Das** has been a teacher trainer for over 35 years. Her first love is Primary education. Her special interest is reading, which she considers the most important of the three R's. "Without reading we won't get very far and so how we teach reading has to be a 100% successful" she feels. Ayesha Das did her TTC from Loreto House and followed it later with a B.A from Calcutta University. She went on to do a diploma in Education from the University of Leeds and M.Ed from the University of Manchester. She may be contacted at [ayesha.das@gmail.com](mailto:ayesha.das@gmail.com).

