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A MATTER OF PRINCIPAL

THE FLAMBOYANT PRINCIPAL

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The Flamboyant Principal

How a 29-year old manager accepted a challenge & went on to change the fate of a boarding school in Nainital & Riyadh

This volume's Cover Story has undergone a reformation and has been transformed into an insight into the world of a leader.

The world's simplest idea –the 'Golden Circle', coined by Mr.Simon Sinek. A man who deciphered the minds of leaders – leaders like the Wright Brothers, Steve Jobs, Martin Luther King, etc. He said exceptional leaders had a way of life; a way of doing things and realising this gave birth to the Golden Circle.

It consists of three concentric circles. It begins with the Why? How? And finally,the What? The purpose of this is to understand what a leader is



Cover Story

My story of becoming the principal of a boarding school in Nainital at an age of twenty-nine years is a little different from most principals, who reach this position after years of teaching and gaining experience at various stages of promotion. In my case it was a challenge thrown at me by the owner of the school, for whom I was working as a manager in his business organization. He had established a very good state-of-the-art boarding school for boys in Nainita. It was his dream project. Somehow, the school in its early years of infancy was not coming up to his expectation. Once, on a visit to the school in October 1987 he asked me,

“Mr. Khan, you are fond of accepting challenges. Can you take charge of the school as an administrator and principal?”

I want to see the school amongst the top educational institutions.” I told him that it was not my cup of tea. I could never imagine myself in the role of a principal especially at such a young age, where the students of grade 10 were only about 12 years younger than me. I had to give it a serious thought when he insisted and

challenged me. I thought over it and the next day, I told him about my decision. I was ready to accept the challenge but with just one condition. He should let me run the show on my own accord, something which he very graciously agreed to. The next day, I was bestowed upon as the Principal of Amtul's Public School, Nainital. The rest was history.

There were three principals in a period of four years before I took over. I had no experience of running a school except the times when I was enrolled in some good schools during my student life. I had seen some brilliant principals then. My immediate task was to keep my house in order and then to improve the standard of education. My competitors were centuries-old established missionary schools, which were located in the same neighbourhood.

“I believed my biggest asset was my passion to change the situation. I also realized after some time that to run a boarding school successfully is more of a manager's job than an academician's job.”



Cover Story

My passion to bring up the general standards of the school and carve a niche for it amongst the best schools of Nainital drove me to work tirelessly and prepared me to work against all odds with a lot of determination. I raised a wonderful team of teachers and administrative staff. Together, we brought in the desired results. In just about two years time, Amtul's Public School was considered as one of the top six boarding schools in Nainital and one of the best 100 boarding schools in India.

In these arduous but satisfying endeavors, we did a number of things which were worth mentioning but I would like to share just one instance here. Incidentally, we did not have a full-sized football ground. There was an interschool football tournament which was a prestigious event wherein all leading schools would take part. This tournament used to generate so much interest amongst the general public in spite of being an interschool event that the common people of Nainital used to look forward to these matches. The stadium used to be packed. As these matches were played on the only public field in Nainital which was called Flats, it was open to all and would draw huge crowds. Two leading schools of the town, namely Sherwood College and St. Joseph College were sharing the winners' trophy between them for the last fifty years. I made my physical education teacher and football coach train my boys at 5am each morning. We used to take them downhill to Flats for a regular practice at a proper ground every day. The players would practice for two hours and then would climb about 500 feet back to school every day. The students were provided with a special diet to keep them fit. In just two years, our football team won the winner's trophy in spite of the fact that we did not have a full-sized football ground. With my students' hard work and good coaching by the teachers, they achieved this feat. I laid emphasis on basketball too for which the school had good facilities. Amtul's Public School's team of basketball was a regular winner for about ten years. The results were for all to see and hence, the school was packed to capacity.

Though I had not chosen this profession, the profession had chosen me. About two years after becoming a principal, it had dawned on me that principalship was the best thing which had ever happened to me. The satisfaction of the job, the pleasure to be with kids at all times, their immense respect and love, the admiration of your staff and the recognition and acknowledgement of your hard work by the parents and general public is indescribable. For more than ten years during my tenure, I was the Vice-President of the Nainital Gymkhana and District Sports Association. I was always re-elected unopposed. The District Magistrate of the city used to be the Ex-Officio President. Nainital Gymkhana is the oldest in the country.

From the beginning, I had started teaching English to Grade 10 students and later to Grade 11 and 12 students, when the school was upgraded to Grade 12. I decided to do it to have first-hand experience of teaching and also to remain in touch with the senior most students of the school on a personal level. The students enjoyed my classes as I would not keep myself confined to only the syllabus. I would discuss any topic under

the sky with them. They would always remember this part of the class. By God's grace, nobody ever failed in my subject and since 1989, 80% or more students of my class always secured distinction in English in Grades 10 and 12, which holds true till today.

In the context of a principal as a leader, I always quote a couplet of Allama Iqbal, the great Urdu poet

“Nigah buland, sukhan dilnawaz,
jaan pur soz yehi hai rakhte safar
meer-e-karwan ke liye.”

It means that the leader has to have these qualities: (a) He has to be a visionary (b) He has to be a good communicator who should have the quality to convince people and (c) He must have empathy for the people he leads.

A leader must practice what he preaches, that is what gets him the respect and admiration of his team members.

I believe that all school leaders should have a clear objective of educating and training their students. Nowadays, most of the schools are merely educating their students and not training them, which is a very important part for the character-building of a student. We should not only make our students capable of earning their livelihood respectfully by developing some skills in them, but we must also make them good human beings. Unless we produce decent human beings from our institutions, our job is half done.

I left Amtul's in 2007 to join Daratassalam International Delhi Public School at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This school was established in the year 2003. It had already seen three principals within five years of its inception, almost the similar or even worse conditions than the school where I had started my career as a principal. If the number of students is any parameter of the school's success, which I don't believe in, the school had 800 students up till Grade 10th when I joined. Then, in the next three years, we had a population of 2400. This was an International school which mostly had Indian students, along with other nationalities. Once again, the key to success is passion and hard work. In my thirteen years of tenure here, I was elected the chairman of CBSE schools in Saudi Arabia twice, a role which I am holding currently too. Saudi Arabia has about 40 schools affiliated to CBSE. We also have a Gulf Council of CBSE schools, which has about 200 schools spread all over the region in six countries.

In my long career of thirty three years as a principal, I have seen the transformation of education and the tools of education, from the conventional black boards to smart classes and online classes.



I am still of the strong belief that nobody or nothing can ever replace a teacher. A good teacher is an integral part of a good educational system. Therefore, to me the teachers' development and continuous training is of vital importance.

I want my teachers not only as experts in their subjects but also in other facets of life. They must be trained in other important aspects of life as how to carry themselves, how to dress, how to talk to students and to others, handle their department etc. The teacher is an ambassador of the school. The performance of an ambassador can make or destroy the reputation of the country.

Lately, I have felt that developments like technological innovations have made this world a better place and have made living easier but common sense in people generally is on the wane. That is the result of absence of the right training both at home and at school.

My message to students has always been "Be passionate and honest about what you do. Don't leave any stones unturned to achieve your goals.

Then, success is bound to come to you. Always try to do something for others and you will always be happy".

We had the pleasure of talking to Mr. Mairaj's former colleagues and faculty to take a leaf out of his profound wisdom and understand his best practices and leadership style, along with the challenges they face.

Anju Roy, HOD English, DPS Riyadh

My journey of a long decade at Delhi Public School Riyadh can be summed up in only word one word - RICH. It has been a great growing experience in every aspect of educational pedagogy. This school has a unique culture of its own.

When you enter the school and talk to a student, be it from kindergarten, you feel the difference. Each and every child is a confident, well-informed, articulate individual with a strong personal opinion. There is an air of disciplined freedom. You come back much enlightened.

Most schools call themselves International schools but DPS Riyadh stands up to its name. It is a mini globe in its truest sense. You can see children from more than 20 nationalities (Indians, Saudis, Sudanis, Egyptians,

Russians, Syrians, Africans, Malaysians, Indonesians, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, etc) filing up in the morning assembly on the school grounds.

This multicultural fabric of this school is being beautifully nurtured by the head of the institution, Mr. Mairaj Mohd. Khan and his team of enthusiastic educationists.

A teacher in DPS Riyadh is not just a teacher. If she is an Urdu teacher, she is a famous poetess. If he is a music teacher, he is a famed musician. If he/she is an English teacher, she is known for beautiful calligraphy.

The Science / Math teachers have authored books; the Art teacher holds his own exhibitions, the Quran teachers are highly evolved Islamic preachers. Such is the selection of teachers.

The ship reaches its shores only when the helmsman steers the wheel with his experienced hands.

All this would not have been possible without a wise, strong, visionary, leadership behind. Our Principal Mr. Mairaj Mohd is a tall institution himself. He is not only a firm administrator but also great orator, singer, sportsman along with a history, literature and poetry enthusiast. Being a voracious reader and a seasoned traveller, you can talk to him about anything under the sun. His sartorial style and mannerisms have been much emulated by his students over the decades.

The parents of DPS Riyadh are global citizens and are invited with open arms to be a part of this family. Their voices are heard, their grievances addressed personally, and their ideas held in high regard.

Every event in the school from the more serious inter-school debates to farewell parties of the passing out batch, is like a royal wedding being planned. The Principal, teachers, student council, nannies, peons, drivers all put in meticulous efforts to translate any event to a success.

CHALLENGES AS A TEACHER AND THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

As a teacher of English language in present times, the biggest challenge is to wean the child off the overwhelming internet influence. On one hand the internet is a handy tool and on the

other it's like Aladdin's Genie. Everything is ready at one command. The use of SMS lingo is another challenge. In the times of audio books, how many students would be interested to read old classics, write poetry or learn the rules of grammar? Today's children have no patience for creative writing.

I have always told my students stories about the lives of famous authors, their traits, their times which gets them interested about a bygone era. I also ask them to research and tell me if they come across something interesting. This gets them started. My class is always a meeting room of friends where everyone exchanges anecdotes, honest personal opinions and nobody is 'afraid' of the teacher.

They discover a new passion as I ask them to pen down their thoughts. I teach synonyms of words e.g. hurry-haste, girl-lass, brothers-brethren, etc. Every beautiful piece of writing is read out in the class to encourage the child and motivate others.

They fall in love in love with the language. Then I keep honing their pronunciation and voice modulation with role plays, drama, elocution, and debates.

With the passage of time, some of my students have gone on to become highly successful editors, anchors, correspondents of famous international journals, TV channels like BBC, Bloomberg TV, Times of India, etc. They have lifted many a trophy at Toastmasters Clubs.

SOME PRACTICES THAT HELPED IMPROVE STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE

As the Head of Department of English, I have had a free reign given by our Principal to bring in teaching practices / curriculum changes to improve the performance of the students. Mr. Khan has been co-teaching prose to grades 11 and 12.

I realised that certain English books had a lot of exercises on formal writing like notice, formal letter etc. in grades 3,4 and 5, which was stressing the children to write in a controlled format. In my opinion children at this age should let their imagination run. I introduced content like informal letters, story writing, picture composition, persuasive poetry writing, descriptive paragraphs, pictorial travelogues, interviewing grandparents, neighbours etc. in the curriculum.

I also introduced small abridged English classics from grade 4 to 8 to encourage reading for joy. The pictorial books were very well received by the students and parents alike.

I laid a lot of stress on comprehension passages in every grade for better and effortless understanding of English later in life.

All the above were highly fruitful exercises.

HOW I RATE THE SUCCESS OF MY SCHOOL

DPS Riyadh stands out by every parameter possible, be it academic results, extra-curricular activities, physical education, discipline, ethics, to name a few. Our students are academically proficient, ambitious, talented and get easy admissions in the top universities of the world. They go on to make meaningful contribution to the society and bring laurels to their alma mater.

S.I.M.Jafri (former teacher English and Librarian Amtuls Public School)

Mr.Mairaj Mohd Khan, Principal DPS, Riyadh and former Principal of Amtuls Public School, Nainital,was my mentor for almost a decade and a half. He worked very hard for improving its standards of teaching, learning and dissemination of ethos and values for making it a top-class liberal school.Under his able guidance and mentorship ,the school rose to such a staggering height that we were at par with other century-old schools in Nainital,a place famous for its residential schools.

Being one of his subordinates, I personally admire his qualities as a considerate,accomodative, caring and stern principal cum leader,who had put his signature all around.

During my tenure in the school, we had the honour of having Mr.Shatrughan Sinha, Azharuddin, Kapil Dev, Manoj Prabhakar, Ms.Kiran Bedi, Mr.Motilal Vohra, Mr.Romesh Bhandari, the then Governors, Salman Khursheed, Sunil Dutt, Vinod Khana, Jagjit Singh, Shah Nawaz Hussain, Bishan Singh Bedi and many more.



Right now,our old students of all class, clan and race are busy in nation- building and also serving foreign lands as well.

Another unique tradition which he had established in that institution was the celebration of the festivals of all religions with equal enthusiasm and gaiety. He would distribute Eidi, a token amount of money to all on Eid and would celebrate Holi, Diwali and Christmas with equal spirits.

Sarah Sultan, Headmistress, Junior Wing

My journey at DPS Riyadh has been very challenging and rewarding.

As a Kindergarten teacher, we have challenges to overcome like developing in children the passion and love for learning and simultaneously making the procedures of learning enjoyable, engaging, exciting and full of fun.

To me the best measure of success is to ensure that children are always happy and look forward to come to school.

The spontaneous love, warmth and affection from these angels is the highest form of success or reward any teacher can dream of achieving.

There have been innumerable elements which have played a vital role in improving the standards of learning. For instance, some of them are teaching color concepts by incorporating play way method which involves celebrating color days with a particular color theme. There are many other examples of integrating real life scenarios and situations such as teaching children about various fruits and vegetables by setting up a fruit & vegetable market. In fact we aim to develop a unique and innovative concept whilst not leaving out the element of fun.

DPS is famous for quality education and our school is par excellence as far as the methodology is concerned. We have a team of experienced and qualified teachers that make us proud.

Our Principal Mr.Mairaj Mohammed Khan is a visionary and under his able leadership and guidance, the school has reached heights of success. His style of functioning has set out high academic standards while concurrently encouraging the entire staff to meet and exceed the expectations of parents by striving to deliver the very best a child can get. We are very lucky to have him as our leader, guide and mentor.

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Mr. Mairaj Mohd. Khan

Principal
Daratassalam International
Delhi Public School,
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Letter from the Editor

The articles featured this month talk about the focus being shifted to more on making sense of information, sharing and using it in smart ways in the classroom. The aim of schools should be to judge themselves and improve on their own performance. They need to believe in asking themselves whether what they are doing today, is getting them closer to where they want to be tomorrow, and to achieve that the school should rely on self-evaluation.

Articles on Teacher Training here essentially mean capacity development of teachers that entails learning various competencies, skills, knowledge, tools and technologies to improve teaching-learning in schools.

[READ FULL ARTICLE](#)

Kalpa Kartik

Editor



Sultan Speaks

When the fear is not natural but created! “Fear of my child missing out”

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a relatively new term in our vocabulary, but fear is as old as man itself. A few millennia ago, when man was a hunter-gatherer, ‘FOMO’ must have driven him to always remain with the pack so that he does not miss out on the ‘prized’ hunt or the fresh fruit.

While man has evolved with time, fear continued to live within him and it drove him to remain in organized societies and serve his well-being. As long as the fear was natural and the driving force of this fear was the well-being of man, things remained pretty much normal. This fear started taking a different form and its impact changed dramatically when the fear was not natural but created.

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Syed Sultan Ahmed

MD & Chief Learner @
LXL Ideas



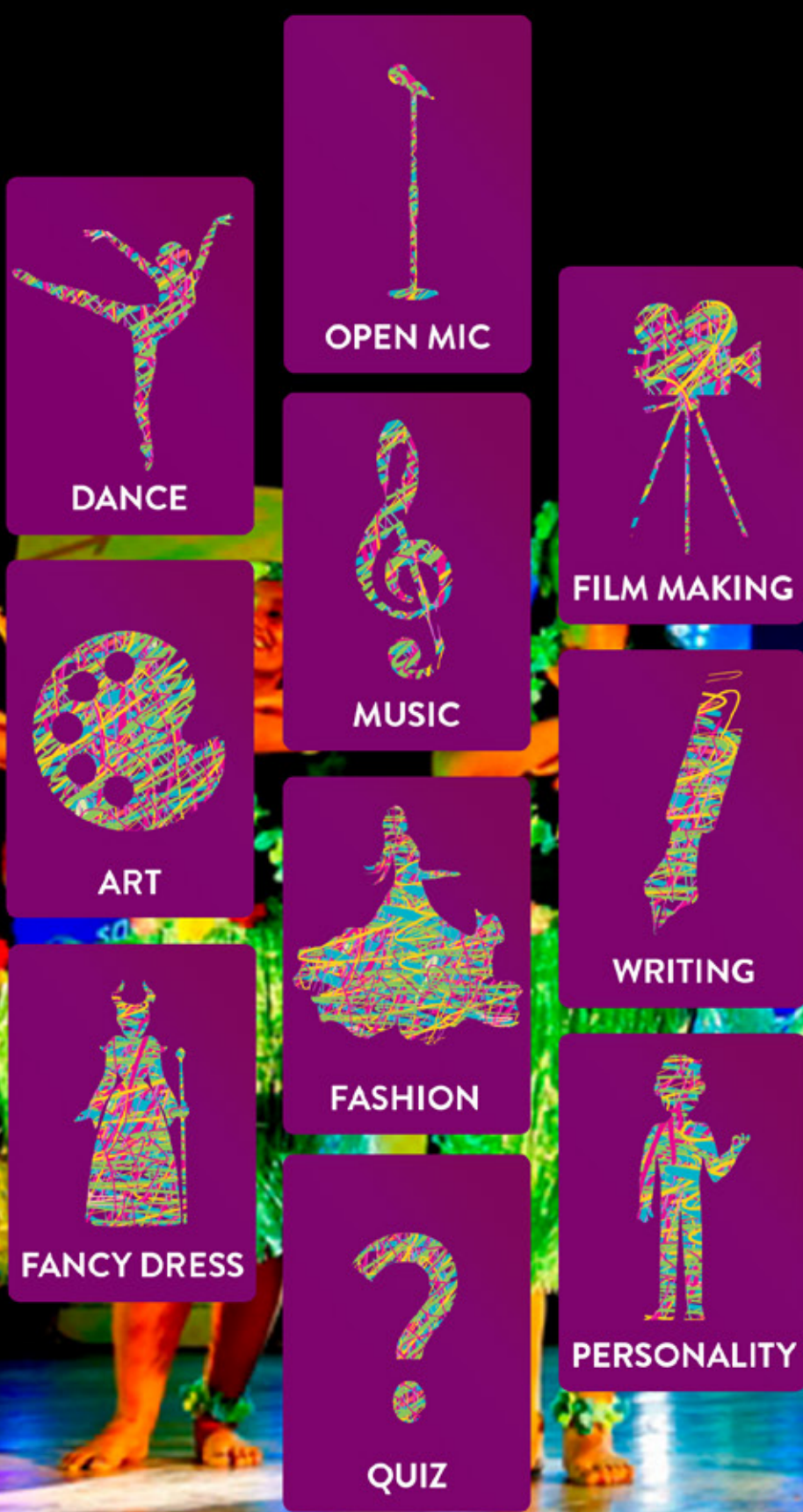
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What's Trending



“Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition.”

Jacques Barzun
American Historian

Teachers are entities where there are endless expectations. A teacher, along with his/her umpteen capabilities always has to have adaptability in situations, resilience is the worst of times, and leadership at all times. They live a life-giving and are under tremendous pressure at all times. This World Mental Health Day, we need to highlight the state of Teachers' Mental. Health in our community.

How does your school help its teachers stay in the best of health mentally? What support they get?

[READ FULL ARTICLE](#)



Pedagogy

Emotional Quotient in Education

Can Emotional Intelligence affect performance in students?

The aim of education is to be emotionally literate so that students can manage their emotions to enhance their learning and form rewarding relationships in their personal and professional lives; to contribute in a positive and meaningful way to bringing about a just and fairer society; to lead balanced lives; to find a career which will be rewarding, challenging and enjoyable.



Positive, effective interpersonal relationships are an important element of successful teams as an English teacher and Vice-Principal, it took me quite some time to understand its extreme importance.



[READ FULL ARTICLE](#)

Gowri Venkatesh

Vice Principal
Delhi Public School, Nacharam
Secunderabad





Governance

Fearlessly Free

Why a sense of amicability towards approaching teachers & education is important for students

Change in the education system is not easy in our country, where a generalized approach to academics is followed, irrespective of every child's uniqueness and ability. Underlying it all is a fear. From every angle. The teachers fearing being unable to complete their syllabus on time; fear of the students being unable to attain the scores that are expected of them and thus disappoint those around them; fear of parents that their child will not perform as well as their friends and classmates and of course, the fear of the school management that the overall school ratings would drop if certain academic criteria are not met.

[READ FULL ARTICLE](#)

Bikash Mondal

Principal
DON Bosco School,
Park Circus,
Kolkata

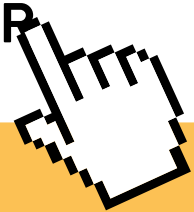


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