

## Institution-Building

31 May 2012

### Introduction

Indus completes nine years, and in this very short span we have every reason to be proud of our achievements – a family of three IB schools, an equal opportunity school for the under-privileged, the Leadership School, ITARI, two IELCs, leadership branding, and reputation for whole-education and inclusivity. And it does not stop there. Indus Bangalore is ranked the second best international school in the country with Hyderabad as tenth. I am certain Pune will be on the honour roll this year. Such achievements would not have been possible but for the camaraderie, commitment, and leadership displayed by you.

Our unbounded success would never have come unless we had imbalanced ourselves. However such meteoric rise has come with a price: personalization of leadership, attrition because of perceived insecurities, at times a disconnect between students and teachers, role confusion amongst teachers – teach the subject or teach the child, and a sense of ownership.

Great schools cannot be based just on charismatic leaders. Over time there is a danger that Indus may identify itself with a few leaders. When they go the organization loses its identity. Leaders are architects; they design schools around mechanisms that perpetuate the core purpose and values of the school.

It is now time for us to pause, consolidate, reflect, and conduct an honest self-appraisal. To be good is not enough; we must become great. To be great involves institution-building on the strong foundations we have created.

### The Meaning of Being Great

What does it mean to be great? A clear understanding will help in defining the end state we seek. Great schools have distinct characteristics:

1. They are **different to others** and these differences are non-negotiable; they have signature strengths that others do not possess. Our differentiators stand out:
  - The **purpose of education** is to prepare an individual to succeed in life and be an engaged citizen. This philosophy has still to receive wide acceptance by all stakeholders.

- **Leadership** development in a structured manner as it has to be learnt like any other art and science. We define leadership as the ability to lead oneself first, then others. To lead oneself, one must first serve others.
  - **Whole-education** but not at the cost of academic excellence based on the principle of inclusivity. Despite every effort it is taking up to five years to implement this concept.
  - Strong **social orientation** to make a difference.
  - Jointmanship with **parents**.
  - A professional **faculty** that believes in teaching the child and not just the subject.
2. A distinct **organizational culture** that guides work ethics; personal and professional relationships with teachers, students, and parents; and self-development. Culture is the collective total of vision, beliefs, values, assumptions, and habits that affect the way we think, act, decide, and solve problems. Like any organization we too have our share of shortcomings, but we can take pride in promoting a culture of **transparency**, and **personal growth** for the staff and faculty. There are few organizations where **intellectual dissent** is encouraged; we are one.
  3. As opposed to being personality-driven, great schools are driven by well tested **systems and processes**. These affect all aspects of school life from curriculum, to pastoral care, to administration, and teacher development. In the last nine years these systems and processes have been documented and shared to rule out personalization. Regrettably, they still have to take root. This delay may be explained by our traditional belief in hierarchies, and the fact that schools have never been accustomed to corporate governance.

### **Aligning Vision and Actions**

In a world of constant change, chaos, and uncertainty, fundamentals are most important. The fundamentals of every organization are its core ideology and values. At

Indus it is leadership and the values of love, empathy, discipline, and respect. Together they give us direction, continuity, and identity. Both are enshrined in our vision.

The Indus vision is sacrosanct; it is our mantra, it is timeless, it is our mandate. To be great we must preserve the vision at all costs, and practice it every day. The **first** step in aligning values with actions is for all teachers and students to have a clear **understanding** of the values. The real test would be for an outsider to be able to infer our core ideology and values in one day's visit. Understanding gives us our GPS location.

The **second** step is to correct misalignments. I would like you to reflect on whether most of our actions in the past are in sync with our values? Do we practice the values we preach?

This alignment strategy can succeed provided well-practiced mechanisms are in place in schools. These are highlighted in the succeeding paragraphs.

### **Action 1: Discipline**

Our differentiators are non-negotiable. Although student and teacher **discipline** does not feature in the list, I would like to include this. No individual, institution or society can become great unless it is self-disciplined. In the context of learning and self-mastery discipline plays a pivotal role. This explains why student and teacher discipline are prerequisites for academic excellence.

### **Action 2: Goal-Setting by Faculty and Students**

For all-inclusive schools like ours, goal-setting is important for improving academic and leadership performance – goal-setting by both teachers and students. One without the other is meaningless. Goals that are SMART, along with detailed plans, should be set at the beginning of the session and reviewed every quarter.

In the manner teachers provide an assessment for learning for individual student assignments; they should also review the progress students have made in achieving their goals.

### **Action 3: Balanced Score Card**

Balanced Score Card is a system, consisting of strategy, people, processes, and technology. We have introduced this quality evaluation model in a progressive manner; this session in Indus Bangalore, and next year in our schools in Pune and Hyderabad. The Balanced Score Card will go a long way in aligning the schools behind a shared vision of success, accountability, and focus on international benchmarks. The system ensures doing right things (strategies) and doing things right (results).

### **Action 4: Formal and Informal Feedback**

Success = Practice + Feedback

Assessment for learning

Constructive feedback and ability to receive negative feedback from parents and superiors

Established structures for feedback: monthly faculty meeting, academic meetings by Heads of School / Coordinators and Heads of Departments. These must be held without fail.

Receiving brutal facts from students and teachers once every six-months.

Preparation of agendas and minutes of meeting.

### **Action 5: Instituting Best Practices**

Class Lesson Plan

Part of teacher's professional growth plan

Prepared department wise with everyone's inputs

Relevance

Student-talk time 70 %

How to promote think-time?

Student practice and short test of taught content. Students solve the problem on the board and others comment.

Differentiated Learning

Calendar Routine

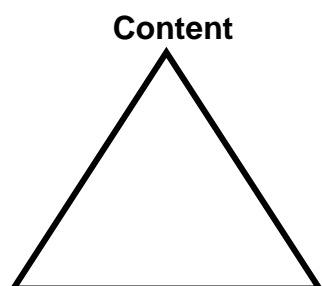
### **Action 6: Teach the Child and not Only the Subject**

Purpose of education is **preparation for life** and to be an **engaged citizen**. In turn, this demands the need to go beyond traditional 3Rs. Teachers should equip students with survival skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – 5 Cs. For example, how will you teach critical thinking and creativity through mathematics, physics, and history?

### **Action 7: Capacity-Building of Faculty**

There are three mantras to build the capacity of teachers for student learning

1. The only way to improve student learning is by improving teaching and teacher dispositions.



## **Student Learning**

### **Pedagogy**

### **Dispositions**

2. Performance is not what you know (content), but what you can do with what you know (application in life) – RELEVANCE
3. Self-development is a prerequisite for professional development

10 % of working time to be used for self and professional development

Succession planning

Deep selection

Experienced teachers (with reduced teaching load) to be placed as coaches to improve classroom teaching

Insider promotions

ITARI is playing a key role. Two themes for professional development will be selected every year.

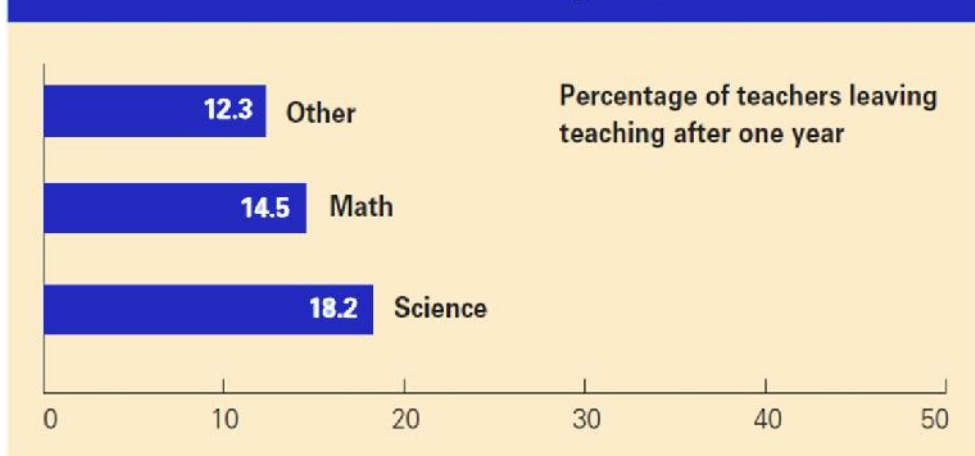
### **Supporting Beginning Teachers**

With the growing number of international schools, there is an acute shortage of trained teachers. There are cities like Hyderabad that do not have adequate teacher infrastructure. Most teachers have to be imported. Under these circumstances, it is advisable to offer a career in international career to aspiring postgraduates and graduates fresh from university.

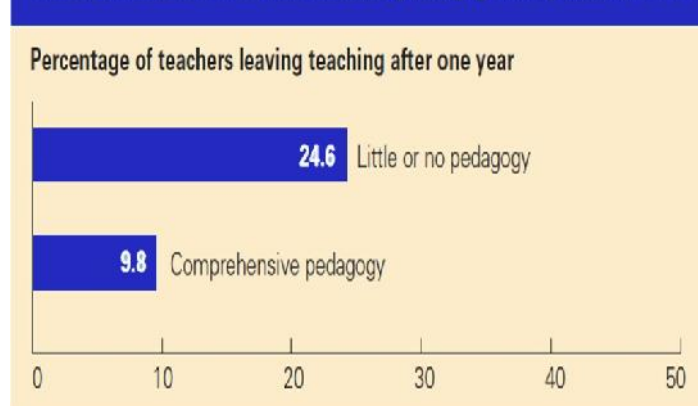
But this is a challenge!

It is customary in most schools to throw beginning teachers into the deep end of the pool without a life line. They are expected to fend for themselves. Consequently, they either leave or get demotivated. See Figures 1 and 2 below. Beginning teachers are like trained pilots but not the captain of the aircraft. It takes about 4 years for a first pilot to become operational.

**FIGURE 1. Attrition of First-Year Teachers by Field, 2004–05**



**FIGURE 2. Attrition of First-Year Teachers by Pedagogical Preparation, 2004–05**



Beginning teachers have many questions for schools:

1. We didn't understand what's required of a professional.
2. We didn't learn how to teach content.
3. We didn't grasp essentials of classroom management.
4. We didn't know how to plan instruction.
5. We were unprepared to differentiate instruction
6. We needed to better understand 'student engagement.'
7. We needed to learn how to integrate technology.

We need to abandon the fallacy formula *Effort + Intelligence + People = Success*. We need to acknowledge that there is a difference between subject knowledge (*content*) and pedagogy (how to *teach content*).

ITARI should prepare a policy on the recruitment and training of beginning Teachers.

### **Action 8: Standardization**

We are a family of schools and our strength will lie in strong branding and ensuring quality is equitably distributed in all schools and all departments of school routine. Standardization of all **systems and processes** is, therefore, essential. Such an approach also helps in raising new schools with quality, interoperability, and professionalism. The following areas are being standardized:

- Curriculum documentation to include policies, international benchmarks, curriculum overview, lesson design, and daily lesson plans.
- School calendar – academic session, subject period allocation, teaching deployment loads, organization of leadership camps, support classes, and preparatory classes in hostels.
- HR policies and recruitment processes.
- Discipline policies.
- SOPs in administration, pastoral care, and organization of sports.
- Text books.
- Organization of Investiture and Graduation Ceremony.

### **Conclusion**

I would like to end with a historical perspective of high performing schools that contribute significantly to institution-building. Institution-building cannot be done in isolation. We must find out what themes, policies, and practices are responsible for best performing schools around countries that are best performing. Research and studies show that the following four success factors account for the best education in schools:

1. **Quality of teachers** lies at the soul of the world's best school systems. Quality is defined as:
  - Subject mastery.
  - Aptitude for active student-engagement.
  - Individual attention to weak students and providing them assessment for learning.
  - Mentoring students and even career counseling.
2. Constant and determined efforts by schools to **benchmark the best** in the world, and deciding to get all students to those standards.
3. Annual academic **goal-setting** by teachers and evaluation of success.
4. **Quality assurance** with enormous amount of diagnostic and **formative assessments** in classrooms.

### **Group Reflection (60 Minutes)**

1. What is the No1 problem you are trying to solve in the classroom? What policies, practices and structures may need to change in classrooms and school to solve this problem?
2. When systems and processes have been tried and tested, then why is the **tipping point** for new schools around four years?
3. Come up with three most **significant misalignments** pertaining to each of our four core values?



4. What do you think are **three signature strengths** of Indus, and how can we leverage them more than what we are doing?

5. What is one major **weakness** that needs to be fixed; and how?

### **Individual Presentations**

10 minutes for each presentation.