

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

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

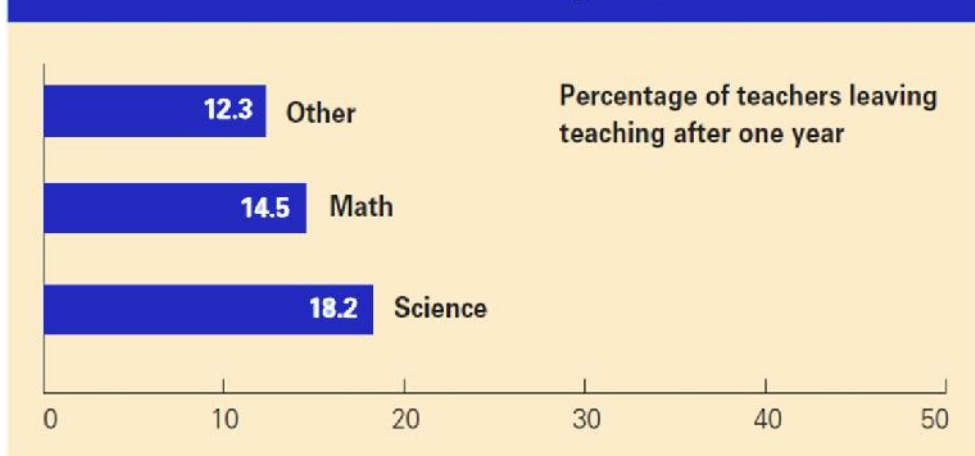
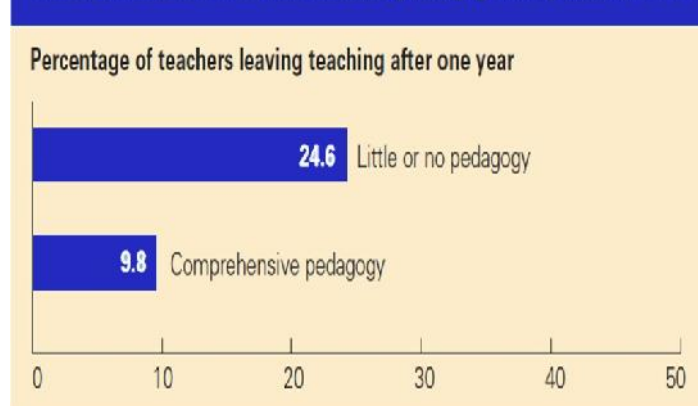


FIGURE 2. Attrition of First-Year Teachers by Pedagogical Preparation, 2004–05



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.

