

## INSPIRATIONAL SCHOOLS - a local study of Indian Public Schools

-Dr. (Mrs.) Indu Khetarpal

***Invest in yourself : inspire others and learn from others; learning should be a lifelong process; only then it is Inspirational Learning.***

A long and illustrious history connects Africa and the Indian sub-continent. We have evolved from an abyss of exploitation and struggled and sweated for resurgence. India's links with the struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa date back to the period during which Mahatma Gandhi started his Satyagraha movement in South Africa over a century ago. India was at the forefront of the international community in its support to the anti-apartheid movement; just as it struggled to achieve its own independence and endured the turmoil of partition of India and Pakistan.

One of the major challenges that India faced in the post-independence period was educating the masses as education was then the privilege of the elite. Literacy was at its lowest ebb and attainment of Education was very difficult for the middle and the lower middle classes.

Founder of the Salwan Education Trust, Pt. Girdhari Lal Salwan, in the year 1936, overtook the education of minorities in Peshawar now in Pakistan. **Pt. Girdhari Lal Salwan** - a visionary, vowed to impart education to all- to the neediest of the needy - irrespective of class, caste, religion and creed - free of cost.

During partition in 1947, he left Peshawar and reached Delhi. Providing education to the children of the displaced being uppermost in his mind, his untiring efforts resulted in establishing two schools - one for boys and one for girls. He had conceptualised partnership in education by introducing the theory of sharing of facilities between Private schools and the schools for underprivileged. An education hub at Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi was created where Salwan Public School shares the facilities and helps in providing quality education to all. Each school out of the five schools in the campus has an inherent potential which is nurtured and harnessed to bring out the best in the students.

This is best explained through the **‘Whole Brain Thinking Concept for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’** which outlines four dimensions of planning and which are as follows:

- Goal Driven : that requires analytical intelligence
- Result Driven : that requires operational intelligence
- People Driven: that requires relational intelligence
- Vision Driven : that requires creative intelligence

Let me share with you all, the experiences and achievements in setting up of two inspirational schools: SPS, Rajendra Nagar and SPS, Gurgaon. The Gurgaon School which was set up in 1996 was developed as per plan on the most innovative framework to nurture responsible global citizens who are sensitive to other cultures and people and who are conditioned to respect their environment, develop a social conscience and give something back to society. It was like planting a sapling which grew and took shape in the desired direction with expected outcomes. Moreover, in the said school student activism, a modern outlook which ensured a win-win situation for the young learners was comparatively easy to generate. This was possible because of the provision of a flexible learning environment where Learning is two-sided. It is not limited to the student or the teacher in isolation. Both the student and the teacher realise and accept that they learn from each other, both are inspired from each other and that is what makes learning effective and pleasurable.

But my experience at leading SPS, Rajendra Nagar, the flagship institution has been much more challenging and demanding simply because being established in 1953, it required reviewing of old strategies and curriculums, replacing and renewing redundant policies and re-working on establishing the progressive and global outlook amongst the young learners as well as the faculty. Though it cannot be denied that the hold on the legacy was stronger here as the people had experienced the pangs of the partition (during 1947), suffered the impacts of the colonial dictates and struggled hard to emerge as educated and independent. Therefore the goals of achieving academic excellence had now to be reviewed and reworked in the light of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and outlook.

Thus it was the traditional versus the modern concept of education.

SPS, Rajendra Nagar testified as the traditional approach as against SPS, Gurgaon as the testimony of the modern approach. The flagship institution required brain waves of change in keeping abreast with the fast changing global scenario.

Therefore, upholding the motto of 'Service before Self' we created a paradigm shift in the learning environment so that education acquires the perspective of **Education with a purpose**. After due deliberations, analysing the needs and with specific targets in mind, **a detailed plan** with innovative pedagogy incorporating various scholastic and co-scholastic modules was chalked out. This targeted both: academic excellence and promoting creativity, teaching the young learners to think, to create and to innovate.

The planning entailed procurement of resources, organizing, co-ordinating, influencing, stimulating and integrating in order to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Some of our endeavours are listed below:

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE:** The main ideology adopted for teaching, is 'Learning by Doing'. Some of our signature items are:

- **Project Based Learning**

Programmes like Science carnivals and **Carnival Club Creations** to engage the young generation constructively thus enhancing skill development which is showcased through these programmes and which facilitate mass participation. At the same time, these programmes are quite reverse to the old stereotype methods of theoretical learning and promote learning in a very innovative, interesting and pleasurable manner.

- **Experimental Learning**

Field Trips- To provide practical experience various trips are organized.

Start Ups- To encourage Entrepreneurship: Hand wash, Shampoos, Candles are made in the school lab.

**ATAL TINKERING LAB:** This is a landmark achievement of the school. Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) are a part of the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) launched by the NITI Aayog, Government of India. These labs are being set up to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds and inculcate skills such as design mind set, computational thinking, adaptive learning etc. It is a matter of immense pride that Salwan Public School is one of the few schools selected for being a state hub school supported by Intel under the aegis of AIM. ATL provide educational and learning 'do it yourself' kits and equipment on -

science, electronics, robotics, open source microcontroller boards, sensors and 3D printers and computers and so that young children explore new horizons converting their dreams into reality.

The next milestone to be achieved was the **re-designing of the Pedagogy** to implement the new plan and achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> Century goals which sensitize the youth to their social obligations and which would be achieved by instilling the right attitude and moral values. Some of our ventures in pedagogical innovations are as follows:

### **Publications**

The school provides a meticulously planned annual calendar that streamlines various activities planned for the year, and subject specific weekly planners to keep the students and the staff well aware of the daily schedule. The Reckoners comprise of the chapter-wise summary, sample questions with their value points and also exercises and assignments. For primary and middle school, a booklet of assignments for each subject is made available to the students to facilitate learning.

- **Using Text Books Written by Teachers**

The Montessori school is using books which are developed by Salwan faculty.

- **Navtika** is a leading publication of our school, focusing on Early Childhood. It serves as a practical guide for teachers, parents and other caregivers who manage children between 0-6 years. It is a unique journal of its kind and is subscribed by parents, educational institutions and ECCE practitioners.

The upcoming issue contains articles on inculcating leadership and management skills in early years.

**VALUE BASED EDUCATION:** The school firmly believes that education is not just a tool for personal gratification of individuals which helps them achieve fame and material success but a medium to sensitize the youth towards contributing to society and the nation. **The Blood Donation Camp** for the Armed Forces and their families is a pioneering initiative undertaken by the school every year since 1995. The camp is organized in association with the Armed Forces Transfusion Centre in the school premises. Students, parents,

teachers and other members of the Salwan fraternity do their bit to serve the country by donating blood.

The spirit of service is further set ablaze through 'Samman Diwas' celebrations. The walls of the school resound with patriotic fervour as the brave soldiers of the Indian Armed Forces are honoured. Students from K - 12, their parents, guardians and teachers get the opportunity to interact with the Officers & the families of Martyrs. The event aims at sensitizing students towards the selfless services being rendered by the Guardians of our Frontiers. The presence of the 'brave' instils in students, deep patriotism for their motherland as well as gratitude towards our brave soldiers.

**THE BEAUTIFICATION OF METRO PILLARS** is one of our most laudable projects. The Salwanians transformed the face of the city by creating ingenious murals to adorn the metro pillars. Nearly two kilometres of a Road was adopted by the Salwan Education Trust and after a rigorous Cleanliness Drive, more than 2000 saplings were planted as part of our Go Green Campaign.

The Salwan Education Trust adopted a Village and undertook the responsibility of improving the quality of life by setting up a library, providing educational assistance to children and spreading awareness on social issues such as child marriage, drug abuse and female foeticide.

The next dimension of planning included **involving all stakeholders**; students, parents, alumni, our sister concerns, the society at large and the faculty on the home front and simultaneously building bonds on the global front. The following initiatives were undertaken by us:

**PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP:** Salwan Public School extends its total support to the two Government-aided schools. The Salwan Boys School and Salwan Girls School and are a befitting example of Public Private Partnership. For three generations the two government schools have been imparting quality education to the neediest of the needy. In this endeavour Salwan Public School is actively involved in bringing about a fruitful change to the two schools. **Salwan Education Trust** is a beautiful example of **Public-Private Partnership** and due to the assistance and extra facilities these govt. aided schools are getting from Salwan public schools, they are at par to any good public school.

They are supported in the following areas –

- Financial support
- Supervising the functioning of the school
- IT Support through Video conferencing, Webinars, etc.
- Maintenance of infrastructure – halls and school grounds

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INITIATIVES:** At Salwan, we cater to all children with varied needs. We firmly believe that each and every child has the ability to learn and maximize his/her potential through adequate learning opportunities, effective teaching and appropriate resources. We provide equal opportunity to all children to learn and grow irrespective of their differences. The Special Education Programme of the school offers individualized remediation and intervention at the Learning Centre set up in the school, for the young learners based on their specific needs; while the subject teachers use creative teaching strategies to celebrate diversity in their classrooms.

The school is also home to many visually-impaired children who learn and blossom in a sensitive environment. The school also arranges for various scholarships which provides them with opportunities on national and international level.(For example : Kennedy Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Programme...) Besides, Shadow Teaching, Remedial Teaching and Mentorship Programme have been introduced to provide additional support for Early Intervention in case of Learning Gaps in order to help students overcome issues related to conceptual understanding.

**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING:** The 21<sup>st</sup> Century also stands out as an era of globalization. Looking at the multi-cultural society that we live in, it becomes imperative to walk shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world which becomes our partner in education besides other things. It was felt that collaborative learning will help to capitalize on one another's resources and skills and also in building international ties.

As such communication technologies such as e-mail, google docs, skype and video-conferencing are used to collaborate with partners-in-learning in different schools and countries. ICT based video conferencing and Webinars are conducted for **Students' Exchange Programmes and Projects**, wherein students and educators exchange ideas and learn through collaboration. The school is developing links with schools in other countries through video

conferencing and other educational portals to engage students and provide a stimulus for collaborative working and discussion wherein the students are in control of technology. As a part of these Exchange Programmes, our students also visit schools in other countries and are exposed to the global practices in educational pedagogy, the cultural diversity and acquire various 21<sup>st</sup> century skills besides adaptation and problem-solving skills. They imbibe a progressive outlook. They learn to act locally, think globally while remaining tied to their own culture and heritage. Thus they learn to assert their own identity while developing respect and tolerance for other cultures and nationalities. Some of our ongoing Exchange programmes are with Seymour College, Adelaide, Australia, Loxford School, London, and International Student Camps at Beijing, China.

**Interface Programme** is another signature programme wherein parents and alumni are invited to conduct classes for the students as per their expertise. Students thus have an opportunity to have a practical exposure from professionals in diverse fields. Parents are also exposed to the class-room teaching learning situation.

The education system in India has evolved through the times from ancient Indian Gurukul system where students lived with the teacher and gained knowledge of our scriptures, the art of warfare and simultaneously learnt various life skills required in that era. It gradually moved on to the British Education and finally what it is today i.e. a multi-dimensional student-centric learning system.

#### **THE VISION AND THE FINDINGS FOR INSPIRATIONAL SCHOOLING :**

- Providing a flexible learning environment where students are empowered and learning is a mutually benefitting proposition to the teacher and the pupil, **inspires both, only then it is INSPIRATIONAL.**
- Incorporating a paradigm shift in the teaching-learning process as compared to ordinary schools by providing students with freedom of thought and expression to question, discuss, disagree and debate over any topic under consideration which defines the modern way of learning.
- Achieving targets not by pressure/inducing fear but by positive re-enforcement which inspires and supports students to reach their full potential, as every child is gifted and only requires opportunities to express himself/herself.

- Latest techniques such as mind mapping, strategy design, and Information Technology are vital components to facilitate learning.
- Sensitizing students to a multi-cultural society, to sustainable development and to bear responsibility and accountability of their actions.
- Empowering each and every student by making him/her invest in themselves, setting their own benchmarks to unleash their potential.
- Our vibrant network of relationships with parents and alumni fosters a strong sense of community, bridging the past and the future.
- We believe in holding firmly to our roots- our rich cultural heritage even as we march ahead on the modern framework and designs in the field of education

Recently a survey was conducted in school over about 839 students to ascertain the factors which inspired students to come to school.



**ANALYSIS OF STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE OF 839**

Parameters	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	No of students opted	%
School infrastructure and facilities	190/72	134/54	50/17	38/17	84/11	117/24	226/32	227	27.05
Teachers and teaching methodology	190/131	134/91	50/29	38/28	84/53	117/62	226/64	458	54.58
Legacy & Heritage of School	190/14	134/5	50/7	38/4	84/7	117/8	226/21	66	7.9
School environment, systems & policies	190/46	134/50	50/13	38/13	84/20	117/29	226/19	190	22.64
School vision & mission	190/60	134/28	50/10	38/9	84/8	117/14	226/18	147	17.52
High academic standards	190/49	134/37	50/22	38/10	84/36	117/28	226/20	202	24.07
Range of co-scholastic activities	190/81	134/70	50/22	38/14	84/34	117/37	226/27	285	33.96
Peer Group	190/73	134/32	50/25	38/17	84/56	117/55	226/52	310	36.95
Leadership provided to the school	190/45	134/20	50/4	38/1	84/10	117/4	226/10	94	11.2
Any other	190/0	134/15	50/0	38/1	84/15	117/20	226/2	53	6.31

Statistical facts revealed that (even today, in spite of all advancements in IT development of distant learning modules) it was the teachers and teaching methodology that was the primary reason for majority of students' enthusiasm to come to school.

The second most inspiring reason for students to come to school was found to be the peer group. They also look forward to meeting their peer group. School is the place where children develop lasting friendships. This validates the fact that learning is most effective when it is based on experiences, learning by doing and by exchange of ideas.

# LEARNING PARADIGM



## ARGUE

Propose and defend your point of view logically.



## SHOW

Exhibit and exchange insights on what you have learned each step of the way.



## EXPLORE

Search and discover multiple paths for arriving at your conclusion.



## DEFINE

Concisely describe the terms or themes you are dealing with.



## COMPLETE

Conduct a thorough audit on what you have learnt and share your findings.



## IDENTIFY

Seek out at least 3 people in your congregation who have a different understand of the issue.



## REPORT

Using presentation panache, make an eloquent pitch of your learnings.



## LIST

Itemise your insights, to compare and contrast like and unlike information.



## LOCATE

Seek out at least 3 people who concur with your point of view.



## ILLUSTRATE

Using simple imagery, using a minimum number of steps, demonstrate what you have learned.



## GRADE

Exchange notes and evaluate how you have fared against the others.



## CONDUCT

Enact an experiment to test your level of understanding of the subject.



## EXAMINE

Dive one layer deeper to excavate and examine what more you could learn.



## JUSTIFY

Use 3 examples (or case studies) to present a rationale for your point of view.



## SKETCH

Using simple shapes, portray your thoughts to show how you are moving towards a solution.



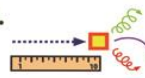
## DIAGRAM

Craft a flow diagram to depict the dynamics of how each element is related to the others in your subject under scrutiny.



## MERGE

Combine, blend, and consolidate what you are addressing with other lessons to emerge with a larger picture of your learning topic.



## RATE

On a scale of 1-10, grade your work.



## ROLE PLAY

Enact a skit to dramatise what you have learned.



## SOLVE

Create a challenging scenario with an embedded issue that calls upon you to use your solution-finding expertise.



## CRITIQUE

Examine, analyse, and assess your work. Do you feel good about it?



## COMPOSE

Arrange your thoughts and design them into a creative power-presentation.



## DESIGN

Using an enterprising mind, craft a blueprint of what is most valuable from the information you have learned.



## TEST

Using diverse contexts, check to see if you are able to apply your learning in each of them.



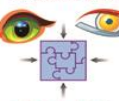
## WRITE

Compose an essay as an eloquent portrayal of your knowledge of the subject.



## COMPARE

Check against an A+++ example of top-quality work and determine where you stand.



## REPEAT

Get a partner (or small group) and repeat the assignment, incorporating differing perspectives.



## CREATE

Using the raw materials (key words, images, themes) of your learning theme, create 1 or 2 fresh points of view.

Source: Dilip Mukerjea, 2017.

**CONCLUSION:** The Salwan Education Trust has successfully upheld its vision of spreading knowledge and excellence in education for seven decades and runs eleven prestigious schools in India. The year 2016 was a landmark year in the history of Salwan Education Trust as it completed 75 years of its selfless and dedicated service in the field of education. All SET Schools were enthusiastically engaged in the celebration by organizing events such as the Mahayagya, Ibadat-e- Ramadan, Gurpurab and Christmas to commemorate the religious diversity of India and to instil a spirit of universal brotherhood and respect for all religions in the young learners while nurturing them to become progressive global citizens.

With freedom comes responsibility. While we provide the young learners with a flexible, progressive learning environment, we strive to imbibe in them the spirit of humanism, integrity of spirit, secular and modern outlook and a sense of belonging to the whole world. “Once a Salwanian, always a Salwanian” is the thought that has gripped our collective consciousness as a guiding force.

**We are committed to be the architects of a progressive world by providing Inspirational Schooling to the young learners for it is through them that we touch tomorrow.**

**Jai Hind!**