

Institution Building

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Introduction

Institutions are social arenas where unique strategies are pursued for inducing and maintaining values, which satisfy societal needs. They are formal, social mechanisms, which facilitate constant transmission of values, for example, a business enterprise or a School.

An Institution is defined as a change-inducing and change-protecting formal organization. Institution Building has a social engineering approach. Its root proposition is that a very large proportion of the most significant contemporary changes, especially in the developing countries, are deliberately planned and guided and are different from those that occur through gradual, evolutionary processes or as the consequences of political or social revolution.

This approach presupposes therefore, that introduction of change does takes place through formal organisations or institutions. These institutions primarily symbolize, promote, sustain and protect innovations. These new standards they promote, must become institutionalized, accepted and valued in the societies they belong.

The sustainability of these institutionalized innovations depends on interactions between the organisations and the environment to which they belong. The institution needs to initially accommodate to its environment for survival, while simultaneously trying to introduce and to guide significant changes in the same environment. This is so because any organization should be able to belong and survive in a system to be able to change that system. Different environments vary in their change readiness and their change resistance and even these may shift decisively over time.

There are certain factors which affect the systematic developmental behaviour of an institution, they are:

- (1) Leadership
- (2) Ideology
- (3) The Programme / Plan /Strategies
- (4) Internal Structure
- (5) Resources

(1) Leadership :

Leadership is considered to be the single most critical element in Institution Building because deliberately induced change processes require intensive, skillful and highly committed management of both internal and environmental factors. A leader therefore, should have extraordinary qualities to be a change maker.

If we look back in history we find an excellent example in the prophet Muhammed (SAW), "a very special man, one who was at once a business leader, a political authority, a community activist, a social entrepreneur, a divine source and a humane role model." (John Adair) He was the builder of an empire, which institutionalized every dimension of society, the political, economical, judicial and social.

The leadership lessons learnt from Mohammed (SAW)s life are :

- a. Complete certainty in the Mission
- b. No compromises
- c. Putting oneself on the line
- d. Resilience, absolute faith in the success of Mission
- e. Putting goal before personal preferences
- f. Living his message
- g. Risk taking
- h. Sacrificing short term differences for long term benefit
- i. Magnanimity and forgiveness
- j. Transiting from Person-led to Process-driven
- k. Succession planning and leadership development

(Leadership Lessons From the Life of Rasoolullah by Yawar Baig)

People who lead are key actors in their arenas embodying the values."There is no leader and there is no led. A leader, if one chooses to identify one, has to be a cultivator rather than a manufacturer. He has to provide the soil and the overall climate and the environment in which the seed can grow. One wants permissive individuals who do not have a compelling need to reassure themselves that they are leaders through issuing instructions to others; rather they set an example through their own creativity, Love of nature and dedication to what one may call the 'scientific method.' These are the leaders we need in the field of education and research, (*Vikram Sarabhai*)

Sarabhai was a prolific institution builder. He set up an institution every year beginning from 1947 till his death in 1971. He left his imprint in fields as diverse as space technology and performing arts. He believed that an institution based on caring for people gave assurance to individuals to innovate and to respond to situations creatively.

The lessons learnt about Institutional leadership therefore are:

- In order to develop institutions it is important to place an individual at the centre of institution building efforts. The task of a transforming and transactional leadership is to present a vision which will inspire many and to provide meaningful exchange relationships.
- Leadership actions have to nurture trust constantly, creating interacting and overlapping clusters both within and outside the organization. Failure to do so is likely to lead to the breakdown of the institutional aspects of the organization resulting in its decline and decay.
- It is important for an institution builder to identify and play multiple (formal and psycho-social) roles within and without the institution. Decline in the performance of institutions could be traced to inadequate roles (both formal and psycho-social)
- While organizational culture is critical to the development of institutions, the importance of building in trust and caring should not be ignored.

(Lessons from Vikram Sarabhai's leadership S.R. Ganesh and Padmanabh Joshi)

(2) Ideology / Core values:

These are the essential and enduring tenets of an organization. A small set of timeless guiding principles or core values require no external justification; they have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organization. They remain fixed while the Institutions strategies and practices keep adapting to a changing world

The process of institution building is the energizing of people so that not only do they internalize values that transcend narrow self-interests but they also become infused with a sense of mission in their total life.

What distinguishes an economic organization from an institutional organization is the intensity and the depth with which individual members of an institutional organization hold the core values which seem to permeate into their total being.

Core ideology provides the glue that holds an organization together as it grows, decentralizes, diversifies, expands globally, and develops diversity.

(3) The Programme or Plan of Action:

It is the translation of the Core ideologies or values to a concrete action and the allocation of energies and resources within the Institution and in relationship to the external environment. These need to be stable, consistent and contributory to the societal needs.

(4) Internal Structure:

This is defined as the system and processes laid out by the institution for its smooth functioning and for its maintenance. The distribution of roles and responsibilities, the empowerment and accountability of its members, the communication system and the commitment of its personnel to its ideologies affect the capacity of the institution to deliver its goals.

(5) Resources :

These are the financial, physical, human, technological and informational or knowledge resources of the Institution. It is very important to ensure the steady and reliable availability of these since they affect every aspect of the institution's activities and therefore form an endless preoccupation of the institutional leadership.

Thus, after having developed, an Institution does not exist in isolation. There are interdependencies that exist between the institution and the external environment. It must therefore establish and maintain a network of relationships with its environment to be able to survive and function. It must engage in transactions for gaining support, overcoming resistance, exchanging resources, structuring the environment and transferring norms and values to be able to change mind sets for its acceptance as a change maker. The institutional leadership in particular should attempt to manipulate and establish such linkages.

I am now pleased to present to you a case study of an Institution which has followed all the above steps in its development and as a result Alhamdulillah, has been successfully running from the past 15 years in harmony internally and externally with its environment.

It has succeeded in being a leader and a change maker and a standard bearer, in this unique system of education, which blends quality academic education with high moral values.

OASIS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL - A CASE STUDY

Toward Quality and Meaningful Education

The discerning eye would have noticed the education system in vogue in most of the schools in our country showing clear signs of decadence and decay.

Students from these institutions are pouring into the marketplace equipped with skills designed to work in an age that has already passed.

The spiraling growth of unemployment and the dependence on private 'training institutes' to acquire vocational skills may be some pointers to the out-dated nature of the disciplines and the antiquated nature of teachers and equipment. More obvious is the near total absence of creative and innovative minds that can leave their mark in the sands of time.

"Unthinking education that is aimed at producing only man-power for industry but not innovators and inventors has consequences whose costs cannot be calculated."

The Other Picture

And if the sorry state of affairs in the purely academic front was not dismal enough, the moral and social aspects have slid to their nadir.

The consumer culture and invasion of unhealthy influences through satellite TV and the internet has not only been affecting the impressionable minds of young students alone, teachers and administrators too it appears have been hooked on in full measure. Their lack of concern at the growing immorality and permissiveness serves as a proof of their own inertia to the growing evils of society. The direct consequence of this is the disappearance of leaders guided by justice and informed by reason.

Muslims and Education:

In any pluralistic society, a community's survival not only depends on its ability to preserve its culture, its language, its religion, its values, its identity; but to larger

extent on its capacity to contribute to society as a whole. A minority group's acceptance in society is directly proportional to the contribution its members make to that society.

However, a cursory look around will reveal a fairly dismal picture of the state of the Muslim Community—both with respect to its own 'standard of living' as well its acceptability by its compatriots.

The Solution:

Top on the list of solutions is to establish educational institutions right from the pre-school level which will provide students quality academic education based on high moral values—schools that are committed to the education of the 'whole child'.

The Muslims of Bangalore had been cherishing this dream for years..... Not so because the Missionary schools do not care about Muslim sentiments, not also because of the difficulty in securing admissions to such over-crowded schools, not too because of the insinuations and innuendoes directed at Muslims for their apparent inability to run quality schools, but, mainly because they considered it their sacred duty to inculcate in every Indian child values and skills which, in turn, will enable them to make a positive difference to the world around them.

Mishkat Education Trust:

17 years back, a group of ladies who shared these sentiments, of which I was a part, established the Mishkat Educational Trust. We were ourselves denied the privilege of an education which embodies the principles and values of Islam and were watching with grave concern our own wards drifting away from the values of Islam.

We had been involved from almost five years before this in educating ourselves with the knowledge that was denied us in our childhood, and informally training Muslim children in the fundamentals of their faith through Summer Camps, followed up by weekend Islamic classes.

We decided to set up a school which would fill the gap, and which would be a model for the growth of 'quality and meaningful education'

We were determined with God's guidance to accept the challenge as an honour, a trust, a responsibility and a great adventure to be the leaders of change.

The Proposed School:

As a first step, a Montessori School, called Mishkat Montessori commenced from the academic year 1997-98 in the spacious premises of the Center of Objective Studies on Queens Road Bangalore. The Montessori was staffed by competent, energetic and enthusiastic teachers, trained in the Montessori Method. The equipment, the facilities, the training and the environment was on par with the best, if not better.

The plan was to strive to gain recognition from established education board(s). To begin with pre-school and continue through elementary and high school, each level having age appropriate instructions and promoting learning through a variety of experiences from computer labs to physical education to Quranic studies. The school was intended to have a diversity in its student community which would create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and develop a camaraderie built on unifying moral commitment.

Aims and Objectives of the School:

- Creating an academic environment that nurtures critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, problem solving and discussion,
- Providing an active learning programme that involves, experimentation, exploration and discovery.
- Teaching students that they must give back to the world-the world they share with many people-and must take an active part in making it a better place to live for everyone as caring and contributing members of the society.
- Creating an environment in which students receive instruction, guidance and sound moral values in a place where dedication to God is nurtured.

- Raising God conscious leaders who are guided by justice and informed by reason.
- Helping train students to be life-long learners by modeling the love of learning.

With all this conceptualized, we were prepared to forge ahead; we needed to move out of the Center for Objective Studies, but did not have the funds to pay rent for another building. We gathered a group of affluent people from the community and requested each one of them to pay a months rent ie. Rs.15, 000, so if 12 people pay one months rent each for a year, after which the school will be able to start paying for itself.

When we moved from the COS, there were certain changes in the members of the Trust. The name of the Trust changed to **“Isra Trust”** and the name of the school changed to **Oasis International School**.

From then on this institution has followed the 5 steps to Institution Building.

- 1) **Leadership:** The leadership team is comprised of members who were committed, passionate and had full faith in their mission.
- 2) **Ideology:** The leadership brainstormed with renowned management consultant Mirza Yawar Baig and derived a core purpose statement which is as follows:

Core Values

I. Tawheed (Faith):

- i. Faith in God and His Unity and Entirety
- ii. Teaching the right of all people to follow the religion of their choice
- iii. Creating in children a distinctive identity in harmony with our pluralistic environment

II. Commitment to Excellence

- i. No compromise on the best in everything that we do.
- ii. Commitment to conservation of nature and natural resources of all kinds

- iii. Excellence in education, teaching skills, behavior, consistency
- III. Amana (Trust)
- i. Treat the child as an Amana of the parents entrusted to the school.
 - ii. Ensure that the values of the school are inculcated in the child
 - iii. Be accountable to the parents for the safety, security, well being and all-round development of the child.
- IV. Ilmu an Naafiah (Beneficial Knowledge: To be committed to teaching and learning knowledge that is described as:
- i. Knowledge that helps you understand, praise and submit to the Creator
 - ii. Knowledge that helps in distinguishing good from bad; right from wrong
 - iii. Knowledge that helps the person understand their rights and responsibilities
 - iv. Knowledge that helps the person to form beneficial relationships with the external environment:
 People: neighbors, fellow students and teachers, society
 Living beings: Plants, animals, the natural environment
 - v. Knowledge that helps you communicate in order to be able to: Lead: tools of leadership , Follow: tools of team working , Collaborate: tools of conflict management , Influence: speak, listen, present your point of view

Core Purpose Statement

To groom Children with High Moral Values in a Multi-cultural, Pluralistic Environment, respecting diversity, to develop the next generation of Leaders for our Country and the World.

3) The Programme , Strategy or Plan: Translating the Core purpose or ideology into action, Team Oasis structured the Vision and Mission statements for the School:

Oasis Vision

To set standards in raising a God conscious, knowledgeable, well balanced and responsible generation of lifelong learners possessing skills and attitudes necessary to positively influence society

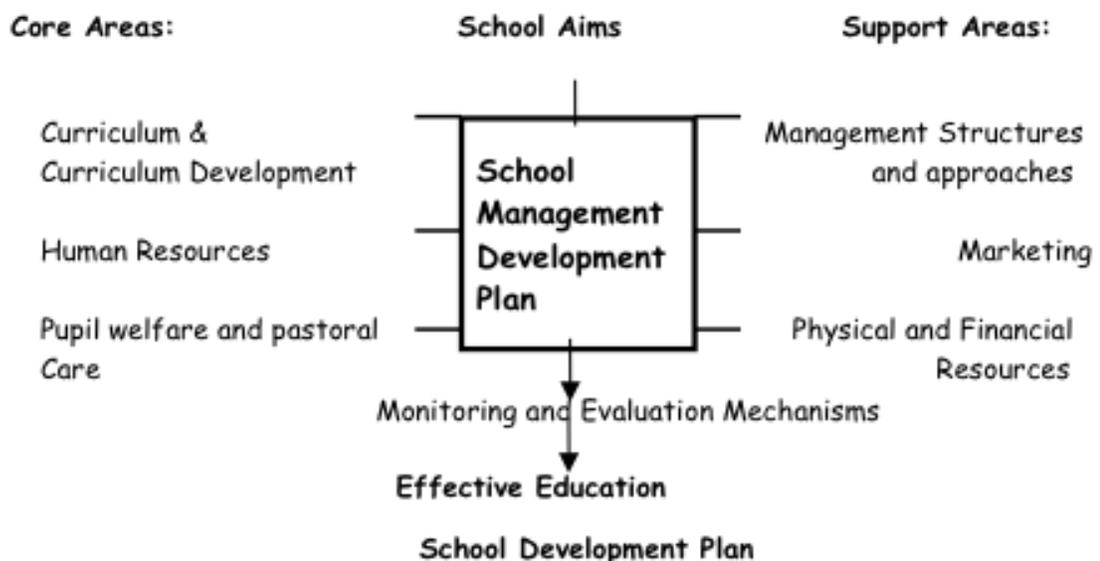
Oasis Mission

Oasis International School will continuously strive towards excellence in all aspects of education by adopting a holistic and dynamic curriculum and providing an emotionally safe and spiritually and morally invigorating environment to all types of learners, irrespective of their social status or religious leaning.

We have thus far accomplished this Vision by building

- A state-of-the-art infrastructure with international specifications.
- An effective, highly motivated team of teachers.
- A holistic curriculum.
- A supportive community.

4) Internal Structure:



- I. Curriculum –
 - International General Certificate Examination (IGCSE)
 - Arabic, Urdu and Hindi as second languages
 - Kannada and Urdu as third languages
- II. Pupil Welfare and Pastoral Care –
 - Management and Leadership Structures –
 - Regular Quality Circle Time sessions at all levels, to build in caring systems in the school
 - Integrating the development of Life Skills along with an understanding of the essence of Islam
- III. Management and Leadership Structure:
 - An experienced, highly-effective educator as Principal
 - A Director of Studies
 - A Senior Management Team - comprising the Principal, Director of Studies, heads of elementary, middle and high school, subject heads (not more than 10 members) This is to ensure a well-run collaborative organisation
 - 3 coordinators each at the elementary, middle and high school who would report to the respective heads.
- IV. Monitoring & Evaluation Mechanisms:
 - i. Annual Performance Review of all staff – teaching and administrative, done by the persons they report to.
 - ii. Final compilation of Performance Reviews and allotment of Increments done by the Trustees in consultation with the Principal.
 - iii. Grievance Redressal System – Senior Management Team along with the Trustees.

5) Resources:

Our main and if I could say "only" resource has been Allah. He has helped us miraculously when we were at the edge and it seemed as if we would have to close. Our faith in Him has always brought us through, like in the words of Barbara Winters, "When you come to the end of the light of all you know and are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown, FAITH is knowing that one of two things will happen. There will be something firm to stand on or you will be taught to fly"

This firmness of faith has helped the school to grow to produce its own resources. Today our resources are our own students, parents and our staff- our leadership team and our teachers.

What will keep us growing is this Faith and the commitment to excellence and never being satisfied by being good since "good is always the enemy of great"

The sustainability of the Institution depends on the infusion of its ideologies in the individuals involved in its running since this institution is built on the bedrock of the value of "respecting the individual."

It's the strong correlation between the 5 factors, that helps sustain the institution in the long run and creates a strong platform to grow and expand.

References:

- i. Inter-University research programme on Institution Building by Milton J
- ii. Institution building: Lessons from Vikram Sarabhai's leadership
- iii. S.R. Ganesh and Padmanabh Joshi
- iv. Leadership Lessons from the Life of Rasulullah (SAW) by Mirza Yawar Baig