ABSTRACT

Introduction

“Excellence” refers to the quality of being excellent. “To excel” means to be exceptionally good at an activity or subject. Excellence means surpassing or outstanding achievement. Excellence refers always to excellent performance concerning something, e.g. in relation to one’s own goals or competitor’s performance. Out of the three interrelated aspects or dimensions of excellence- individual, team and organizational, organizational excellence is the most challenging.

A school is most commonly a place designated for learning. It refers to “an institution for educating children”. In the present study, school refers to an institution for the instruction of children or people under college age. Schooling is an act of consciously imparting values, knowledge and skills in accordance with the requirements in a formal situation. Schooling is only a part of education. School is a formal organization. It is an arrangement or structure within which its various participants cooperate to carry out various activities of the school so as to achieve the organizational goals of educating the young ones.

Excellence in Education

Excellence in education may be defined by the two terms, ‘Education’ and ‘Excellence’. While ‘education’ is the manifestation of the perfection already existing in man, ‘excellence’ instills a longing for perfection in all spheres of activity, whether individual or collective. It infuses mastery and love for quality work in its patrons and evaluates its performance from time to time. It also devises means of improving its end product. Excellence develops a spirit of enquiry, research, perseverance and constancy.
Excellence in the Context of Schools

Schools are an important center for propagation of education. In the context of schools, excellence can be understood on the basis of the two components of school education, namely,

- The Academic component, and
- The Managerial component.

The Academic Component: It refers to that educational output for which all the administrative policies are woven. Academic component of excellence is related to teaching, learning and supervising which take place in an educational institution.

The Managerial Component: Effective implementation of policies, rules and procedures are decisive elements of an excellent school. Its members share a commitment to making the unit extraordinarily successful in accomplishing agreed-on organizational objectives. The focus is on quality through genuinely collaborative team effort.

Attributes of Excellence

The present study aims at understanding excellence in the context of schools from a management perspective. For that purpose, eight different attributes have been identified. It is our endeavour to ascertain the depth of presence of these attributes that lead to creating and sustaining excellence in schools. It is assumed that presence of these and conscious inculcation of these attributes would make schools excellent.

1. Vision, Mission and Core Values

Vision and mission are the two important anchors of an organization as they provide a focus and sense of direction. Mission, when effectively articulated and internalized by the leadership and staff, can have enormous impact on the
performance of the schools. A good vision is one where there is a difficult milestone, but one, which is possible if we put the right teams in place, the right leadership in place and the right management in place. When an organization has internalized a mission, vision of excellence and/or core values, it is charged with a passion for excellence.

2. Entrepreneurship and Inspiring Leadership

Leadership and the quality of leader play a decisive role in attaining excellence. Leaders present a unique blend of charisma, vision and character that attract people to follow them. Leadership styles, leadership tasks and related activities including building trust, making tactical decisions, broadening support, overcoming opposition and inducing flexibility are the main elements of leadership which differentiate an excellent organization from other organizations.

3. Organizational Culture

Every school has its distinct character and identity of its own. This is the sum total of the values and norms and the adherence to it, which have been internalized by all or most of the persons associated with the school. The ‘school climate’ describes the traditions and the deeply embedded characteristics of the school. The members of the school feel a sense of belongingness, pride in the identity, culture and purpose of their organization.

4. Innovation and Organizational Creativity

Innovation, change and creativity are attributes that shape the future of such organizations. Innovation is not only about doing different things, but also about doing things differently and doing well. Each innovation and act of organizational creativity opens up fresh new vistas, perspectives and possibilities and strengthens the culture of improvisation, experimentation, innovation and constructive
questioning. Thus, innovation is a constant endeavor in organizations that are excelling.

5. Social Orientation

Since schools are service organizations, there is direct interaction between the service providers and the service seekers. The excellent schools learn from the people they serve. They consider the time spent with their clients as precious and worth as it helps build up goodwill. They provide unparalleled quality, service and reliability and earn loyalty of the members of the society as well as long-term revenue.

6. Motivation and Reinforcement

Excellent schools tap the inherent worth of the task as a source of intrinsic motivation for their employees. They emphasize more on the quality of motivation rather than the quantity. Through effective motivational methods the best talents and hidden capabilities can be nurtured and canalized to attain the right objectives and goals of the educational institution. The managers and administrators provide monetary as well as non-monetary incentives to the staff, which encourages the latter to work wholeheartedly.

7. Communication Network

The excellent companies have a network of informal, open communication. Communication in excellent schools starts with an insistence on informality and open door policies. A key feature of excellent schools is the presence of well-established communication network- internal as well as external.
8. Simultaneous Loose-Tight Properties

This attribute of excellent schools refers to the co-existence of firm central direction (centralization) and maximum individual autonomy (decentralization). The central authority is there but it exercises minimum interference and delegates to its constituent areas the responsibility for administering their own affairs. The best thing to do is to have a balance of both centralization and decentralization. Excellent organizations balance themselves as both rigidly controlled as well as allowing autonomy, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Literature Review

A survey of the literature on excellence in schools revealed that the topic had been explored by a number of well-known researchers. The researchers have covered the concept of excellence in schools and have explored factors contributing to excellence in schools. Several attributes present in these schools have been crystallized by them. However, it is also evident that so far very little research has been conducted in the field of creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

Methodology

Problem Statement

In today’s competitive world it becomes essential to achieve excellence in varied spheres of activities. Schools, like other organizations, are called upon to offer high quality education. Schools are bedrock of nation building. The excellence in school education has a multiplier effect on the nation’s progress. Keeping in view the need and importance of excellence in schools in India, a concern arises for developing ‘a model of excellence’ for existing and prospective schools.
Research Objectives

The present study aims at:

1. **Identifying dimensions of excellence in general organizational context, as also in the context of schools, in particular.**
2. **Identifying the attributes of excellence in selected schools.**
3. **Developing a Model of Excellence that may be adopted by existing and prospective schools.**

Propositions of the Study

Keeping in view the above-mentioned objectives of the study, the following propositions were framed:

1. **Vision, Mission and Core Values** have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
2. **Entrepreneurship and Inspiring Leadership** have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
3. **Organizational Culture** has a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
4. **Innovation and Organizational Creativity** have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
5. **Social Orientation** has a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
6. **Motivation and Reinforcement** have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
7. **Communication Network** has a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
8. **Simultaneous Loose- Tight Properties** have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
Rationale of the Study

This study intends to develop a 'Model of Excellence' that will help the management of existing and prospective schools to develop excellence in their organizations. In the present scenario, a large number of schools have been established but there is dearth of 'quality' in them. The study intends to help managers and administrators of these schools in creating excellence in their respective organizations and sustaining the same.

Research Design

'Exploratory' research design has been used in this study. Case study method has been employed to obtain information.

Data Collection Instruments

This study primarily uses case study method of data collection. Details regarding background, academic inputs, social orientation and structural features of the schools have been collected and studied in a fairly exhaustive manner through this method. Relevant data regarding presence of the eight attributes of creating and sustaining excellence in schools has been collected by the researcher with the help of checklist. The level of presence of the attributes/sub-attributes in each school is marked on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (lowest level) to 5 (highest level) on a continuum. The schools are then categorized as 'outperformers', 'shining stars' and 'milestones' on the basis of level of presence of the attributes. Also, the researcher conducted personal interactions with different stakeholders, like CEOs, principals, teachers, students and parents to extract information regarding schools. Different research methods like printed documents, study reports of individuals and institutions, etc. have also been used for data collection.
The Sample

The study comprised of 5 units (schools), namely, Eklavya School, Ahmedabad, City Montessori School, Lucknow, Mayo College, Ajmer, Amity International School, Noida and Labour India Gurukulam Public School, Kerala.

Benefits of the Study

1. The study uses case study method to assess dimensions of excellence in schools. The approach can later be developed and perfected further to undertake even more intense assessment.

2. This study will contribute in providing a benchmark for assessing level of excellence, across relevant dimensions, all through a large number of schools in India and abroad.

3. Researchers, academicians and other scholars will be benefited by this research work. They can deploy this approach to conduct similar studies in their area of operation.

Limitations

The main limitations of this study are as following:

1. The researcher personally visited the five schools spread all over India and collected data in accordance with the checklist. So, interviewer’s bias has been minimized.

2. Sample selection is not based on random sampling.

3. More schools could have been included in the sample covering more regions of India.

4. The study was restricted to private unaided schools of CBSE and CISCE. The schools of state education boards and government owned schools were not
taken up for this study for obvious reasons. So, it is not possible to generalize the results for all the schools.

5. Case research is a time consuming job and it is generally not possible to carry out a large number of in-depth case studies in a research project.

6. Qualitative researches are difficult to compare. Since the researcher has adopted qualitative approach, this drawback has to be taken in consideration.

Selected Schools: A Profile

Eklavya School, Ahmedabad

Eklavya School (ES), Ahmedabad is a non-conventional, co-educational English Medium day school for boys and girls. The school aims at providing a conducive ambience for the all-round personality development of children. Eklavya's mission is to bring a fundamental and structural change in the field of school education. It believes that education is an infrastructure, at least, as important as nation's roads, electricity and telecom. Eklavya School aims at developing a 'complete person'. ES has adopted the Maria Montessori approach to primary school education. Eklavya school management actively involves itself and its educators with its social surroundings through home visits and Mother's Workshop. The school activities are primarily grouped on the basis of four sections namely pre-school, junior school, middle school and senior school. There are a number of common facilities that may be accessed by the entire school. The school has evolved the concept of educational managers. Eklavya’s Teacher Training Institute provides synergy to such efforts.

City Montessori School, Lucknow

City Montessori School (CMS), Lucknow, established in 1959 believes that every child is potentially the light of the world. The vision and ideology of CMS is encapsulated in the school motto 'Jai Jagat'. CMS philosophy is simplified in its mission to inspire 'every child to become both good and smart' – good at heart with high moral values, self-
discipline and manners, smart in thought and action and capable of high thinking, hereby, turning this gift of God to mankind into a pride of the human race. Through home-visits by the Teacher-Guardians, CMS strives to bring home and school closer. CMS issues literature on values and virtues in the form of handbooks, story and workbooks. CMS has a "nurturing" culture that recognizes children and treats them as individuals. Apart from academics, sports, games and physical fitness activities are an integral part of CMS. CMS has adopted the American cooperative games, which emphasize the spirit of cooperation. The GEMS program, Science Park and Student Quality Circle are examples of the creativity of the Innovation Wing of CMS.

**Mayo College, Ajmer**

Mayo College was founded ‘to ensure to the sons of the aristocracy of India, a liberal and enlightened education to enable them to keep pace with the ever advancing spirit of the age’. The originator of the idea of the Mayo College was the late Colonel Walter. Mayo College tries to maintain equilibrium between tradition and modernity. It emphasizes on Guru-Shishya parampara. Mayo aims at excellence in academics, extra-curricular activities, games, sports and character building. It offers the students in its fold an opportunity to develop both, the mind and the body. Mayo College offers facilities for a wide range of sports and games. It encourages meritorious and deserving all-rounders and sportsmen to be sent under the Exchange Program with premier public schools in UK, Japan, New Zealand and Australia. Numerous Societies and Clubs encourage activities for individuals as well as for groups for social, literary and cultural development. Mayo College possesses modern computer facilities at its premises.

**Amity International School, Noida**

Amity International School, Noida, aims at developing mental, physical and spiritual potential of each child. Amity aims at blending innovation, modernity and tradition. Philosophy of the school proclaims itself in the belief ‘Vidya Dadati Vinayam’. The school’s vision is to develop world-class educational and technical base. At Amity
International School, students are exhorted to perform various *social service* activities. Amitasha is a school established by Amity International School for the underprivileged girl children. The approach at Amity is *child centered and development oriented*. ‘Learning by *doing*’ culminating in ‘joyful learning’ is the ultimate goal. Amity organizes training sessions for its staff to develop their interpersonal relations and to train them in various skills essential in their daily work. Amity trains students as the ‘soldiers of righteous’. To foster a spirit of leadership the school has adopted the system of a Student Council to help in the management of school activities.

**Labour India Gurukulam Public School, Kottayam, Kerala**

Labour India Gurukulam Public School is a coeducational residential school. The school respects the ancient Indian culture and builds up overall development of the child through the traditional Gurukulam system of education. Labour India School’s mission is to pursue *child-centered and activity oriented* education. The teachers at Labour India Public School act as “facilitators” to the learners. The school believes in *service to the society*. The school management believes that the true development of a child takes place through constant *student-teacher-parent coordination*. The school’s model curriculum balances affective, psychomotor and intellectual domains of learning. The school has “*Saturday activities*” that include mountaineering, gardening, cycling, shooting, home science, etc. Labour India Gurukulam Public School has a number of *common facilities* for its students, like Digital Smart Classrooms, Well-equipped Laboratories, Library and Reading Rooms, Audio-Visual Education, Modern Gymnasium, Sports facilities, etc.

**Findings and Conclusion**

The findings indicate that schools create excellence through the certain managerial attributes. The study identifies eight attributes of excellence for schools, namely, *Vision, Mission and Core Values, Entrepreneurship and Inspiring Leadership, Organizational Culture, Innovation and Organizational Creativity, Social Orientation, Motivation and Reinforcement, Communication Network and Simultaneous Loose- Tight Properties.*
These attributes were found present in all excellent schools, though the degree or intensity of their presence differed from one school to another.

**The 8 in 1 Model of Excellence**

This study identified eight organizational attributes that create and sustain excellence in schools. The crystallization of these attributes helps evolve the “8 in 1 Model of Excellence”. The eight organizational attributes that constitute the 8 in 1 framework are:

1. Vision, Mission and Core Values
2. Entrepreneurship and Inspiring Leadership
3. Organizational Culture
4. Innovation and Organizational Creativity
5. Social Orientation
6. Motivation and Reinforcement
7. Communication Network
8. Simultaneous Loose-Tight Properties

"The 8 in 1 Model of Excellence"
The analysis of the attributes points out that these attributes are overlapping as well. They are not mutually exclusive attributes. Rather they reinforce each other and collectively make schools excellent. The “8 in 1 Model of Excellence”, therefore, is an interactive and dynamic configuration of all the eight key attributes. Leaving out any attribute may render the model incomplete. Thus it can be concluded that the eight propositions of the study are present.

**Highlights**

1. This study corroborates the existing literature and deepens our understanding of the concept of excellence in schools from a management perspective.
2. A model of excellence named the “8 in 1 Model of Excellence” emerges as a result of the study of the selected innovative schools.
3. Each of the eight attributes of excellence has equal importance for achieving excellence and none of them can be isolated or given less importance.
4. This research study provides a base for the school managers and administrators for creating excellence in their schools and other educational organizations. It also highlights the ways of sustaining it too.

**Future Directions for Research**

1. The study can be further extended to gain insight into the issue of organizational excellence in general and excellence in educational institutions in particular.
2. The present study focused on only Indian schools. The studies may be carried out to understand the working of international schools.
3. This study covered both CBSE and CISCE schools. This list can also be expanded further to understand whether the pattern of affiliation impacts the presence and the degree of presence of excellence in the schools.
4. The study has focused on schools, which were run under different structural arrangements. Future studies could find out whether the form of governance has impact on the presence of excellence in schools.
5. The present study has confined itself to studying privately managed schools. Future studies may include government owned schools as well, as their sample units.

6. There have not been enough researches on excellence in schools and other educational organizations with a ‘management perspective’. This is an unexplored area where there is a lot of scope for further studies.

7. The eight core values of excellence identified in the study can be explored even more intensely.