Going the extra mile

By | Aug 28, 2012

H.S. Paramesh is more than just your average school teacher. He mentors the students, meets the parents regularly, and finds ways to improve the conditions of the school, providing the students and teachers with better opportunities. He has also come up with innovative methods for teachers and students to enjoy the process of teaching and learning.

Banjarupalya is a small village about 35 km from Bangalore. It is nestled among green fields well-away from the urban environment. The people are hard working with aspirations of a bright and beautiful tomorrow. Near the outskirts of the village, is the Government Higher Primary School with a small playground by its side. The driving force behind the success of this school is the Teacher, H. S. Paramesh, who has been working here for the past 16 years.

He firmly believes that children, irrespective of their social, economic or cultural background are filled with enthusiasm for life, have unquenchable curiosity about nature and a thirst to learn new things.

There are 175 children and 5 teachers in the school - so it is inevitable that at least two multi-grade classes need to be transacted at a given point in time. “No it is not at all difficult to handle two classes at a time; teachers have been trained in this regard. Also I was one of the team members in developing the training module, ‘Bahu-Mukhi’ and I can guide other teachers to address the situation,” says Paramesh.

The school was started in 1990 in a two-room construction for Classes 1 to 4. An adjacent site was purchased through public contributions and the school was upgraded after new rooms were added. This school attracts children even from the nearby urban areas! This is the result of the goodwill the teacher and the school have earned. “In those days when I first came to this school, the children used to remain hungry in the afternoon and as a result could not be motivated to learn. I used to bring bananas and buns for about 30 children spending my own money. When some of my well-to-do friends came to know of this, they began to contribute towards these expenses. Now mid-day meals are provided by the Government…..” The children have been provided with white uniforms and black shoes apart from the uniforms received through the Department of Education (Govt. of Karnataka). This is the contribution of philanthropists and the community - an achievement which is a feather in the cap of Paramesh who commands a lot of respect among the community and the parents.

Letters of the Japanese alphabet are on the outer walls of the school - do the children of this school learn Japanese? No, the Japanese volunteers who helped in designing and building of the classrooms have written Japanese letters and their English equivalents.

Physical help and financial assistance for constructing well-ventilated and airy classrooms was provided by UGN. The United Games of Nations is a youth network and youth exchange programme with centres in seven countries, India being one. When Werner Graise of UGN visited and witnessed Paramesh’s enthusiasm, they offered their youth initiatives to design a child-friendly school building at the Banjarapalya government school. As a result, the school has very interesting windows and blackboards!

Paramesh has prepared a lot of innovative teaching and learning material which is available for all teachers and children to use at any time. He has used material like empty matchboxes which make the entire effort cost-effective. He has been awarded by the State for this achievement. Paramesh has produced audio tapes containing all Kannada poems taught from Class 1 to Class 7 with background music at a personal cost of around Rs. 40,000.

Learning achievement levels in the school are quite satisfactory along with children’s abilities in other areas. The children have won prizes at the Block level in kho-kho and other sports events even though there is no physical education teacher in the school. The children also learn drama, dance and music and have been awarded prizes in talent competitions - Pratibha-Kaaranj at the block level. Paramesh’s personal interest has made this possible.

Paramesh supports seven children by paying for their transport to school. Parents are not worried about the well-being of their children whenever he is in school, even during the holidays. Meeting parents at their homes or workplaces on a regular basis, paying particular attention to children who absent themselves from school often and making time for those who have difficulty in coping with the demands of the academic curriculum are some of Paramesh’s special initiatives. It comes with no surprise that seeing Paramesh go the extra mile has inspired other teachers do so as well.

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