



## WHAT WE DO:

- School Setup
- School Self Review & Evaluation
- School Improvement
- Leadership & Management Programmes



## A summer of discontent in England!

September began with us (Kavita and Spokey) researching the status of leadership in Chennai and Jaipur. It ended in our visit to our partners in the UK's Open University and National College for School Leadership planning the next steps in projects which will soon impact on nine Indian states. Interspersed with these we met up with our Adhyayan UK network of Roy Blatchford, Will Power, Kate Barron, Amisha Modi, Lily Sommer, Vicky Clayton and Keith Sharp.

This time as well our itinerary was filled with visiting schools and having conversations with parents, children and teachers about what they valued most while choosing schools. All this took place against a backdrop of the most public controversy over the English examination system and teacher accountability. The at times vitriolic nature of that debate had us wondering how it would possibly survive in the more cautious climate in India. The newspapers and television screens were crammed with ac-

cusation and justification over the government's decision to change the grade boundaries for the national GCSE examinations. Introduced to reverse grade inflation, the immediate consequence for many thousands of 16 year olds meant a grade drop to D below the all-important C, which is the passport to further education and employment.

But it was not the debate nor the validity of the positions taken as much as the reaction of the education minister that was worth noting. In the face of fierce opposition he held his ground in spite of a government of Wales investigation which resulted in the principality's refusal to accept the decision!



The biggest take away from the conflict of opinion was that it did not shy away from each side expressing severe criticism and violent disagreement, without fear. Such freedom of expression is, for us, an essential aspect of a mature democracy. For us, it was proof that greater public discourse enables different perspectives to inform decisions and is more inclusive than a single hardline dictated from above.

In our experience, schools that promote a culture of debate and mutual accountability, distribute leadership opportunity across the whole of their school community. Schools practicing such 'liberating leadership' are more likely to be good schools well along the road to greatness.



*Her ability to liberate her staff and students to take on leadership roles in their own right that makes her so effective.*



Smt. Anusooya Sharma

## Adhyayan School Scrapbook – an outstanding Principal!

*Adhyayan will share its school visits experience from different states and nations in this column.*

During a visit to schools in Rajasthan, we met the Principal of Government Girls Secondary School, Smt. Anusooya Sharma. The first impression was of meeting a traditionally dressed 'nani' (grandmother). A proud grandmother, confident in both her

daughters and their 1200 girls between the ages of 15 and 18. Recently these girls had a 3-day 'strike out'. They had refused to attend school and take classes because the state government had transferred her to another school! Thanks to them, today she is back where she belongs.

Her school is in the walled city of Jaipur, Rajasthan. The maze of the

old city is filled with people and littered with their detritus, until you step off the street into an oasis of order and calm that is her school. Its small courtyard is framed by young trees planted amongst the paving and defined by a centre-piece of potted greenery. Beyond the plants, on a raised stage on the day of our visit, a group of 10 years old girls sat studying, absorbed.

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'contd Adhyayan School Scrapbook—  
an outstanding Principal



The paving was still drying from its morning wet mopping when we arrived. The classrooms and public areas were dust and litter-

free and it was obviously not just because we were visiting. The shoes neatly, almost geometrically, placed outside the classroom doorways in lines led to warm smiles inside. The classrooms spoke of a dedication to teaching and learning of girls and teachers alike.

The affection and respect shown by the girls to their teachers was matched by high expectations of teaching and of student's endeavor. The Science being taught to groups of lower sixth equivalent girls in the most rudimentary yet pristine conditions was comparable with UK standards. And yet this school single-mindedly serves a very poor craft community.

We have seen schools in 13 Indian States in the last five years. This was a beacon of light.

A fine state school, much of which is down to its visionary principal, aspects of whose practice is outstanding by international standards. And while it is true that she has created an ordered culture driven both by accountability and passion, it is, in our view, her ability to liberate her staff and students to take on leadership roles in their own right that makes her so effective.

We left her arm in arm with her senior team and colleagues who ran the elementary and secondary sections, posing for the inevitable photos. "My family", she said and you knew she meant that they knew she would accept nothing but their absolute commitment to the children.



*Spokey Wheeler*  
Adhyayan  
International  
Director

As a new principal in my second headship at The Work Foundation<sup>1</sup>, I signed up for its residential leadership programme. What attracted me was that it required the participants to complete a 'Liberating Leadership' self review which was also completed anonymously by five of my colleagues. The results of this review were shared with me so that I would have a perspective not simply on my effectiveness as a leader but on the views of my staff and Chairman on what they thought about my professional profile. This experience was profound and prompted me to support its Campaign for Leadership in my capacity as a business performance coach and advisor.

So why is this relevant to the work of a school principal? What I first discovered

and now am continually reminded of is that leaders don't choose themselves! Followers do that for them if they are very fortunate. Followership is an aspect of organizational culture, which Boards and Principals ignore at their own risk. Followers like the ones who reviewed me annually through my 360 degree liberating leadership review were acutely aware of my strengths and what I needed to get better at. As a school inspector and now responsible for the Adhyayan Quality Standard, I know that the single most influential measure of a principal's and school's effectiveness is to seek the views of its community, especially its students.

So my leadership tip this week is a question and not an answer. I really want to prompt a debate to which you can contribute through our Facebook page and blog on our website.

**As a follower, because all of us follow someone, what is it that prompts you to follow and make someone your leader?**

[Click here to visit our blog and participate in the discussion](#)

Leadership in education and its absence has a higher profile in India's schools today than it ever has. This is your chance to promote the characteristics, skills, and values which good leaders possess. Start thinking and share your views with us to help us create a profile of 'what good leadership looks like'.

<sup>1</sup>Through its rigorous research programmes targeting organisations, cities, regions and economies, The Work Foundation is a leading provider of research-based analysis, knowledge exchange and policy advice in the UK and beyond.

The Work Foundation is part of Lancaster University – an alliance that enables both organisations to further enhance their impact.

**We congratulate Shishuvan, Adhyayan's partner school, for featuring in Hindustan Times' Mumbai's Top schools survey in the East Zone, on 13th September 2012.**

**SHISHUVAN SCHOOL**  
426, SHRADDHANAND ROAD, KING'S CIRCLE Website: www.shishuvan.com

**HIGHEST RATINGS FOR:**  
Academic rigour  
Teachers  
Selection process  
**BOARD:**  
Class 10 - ICSE  
Annual fee: ₹50,000  
Student strength: 1,250  
Student-teacher ratio: 18:1 (primary), 30:1 (secondary)

**HISTORY:** Shishuvan School was set up in 2001 in response to the community's need for an English medium school with modern facilities.

**UNIQUE FEATURES:** Concepts such as 'methods of farming' are taught to Class 5 students by taking them to Dahanu for paddy farming. A School Self-Review and Evaluation (SSRE) is undertaken to evaluate the school in light of its own philosophy, mission and vision.

**"We believe that the child is not always the learner and the adult is not always the teacher. Everyone participates in building curriculum, teaching and learning. Students have a say in what they wish to learn."**  
— NEHA CHHEDA, principal

Adhyayan welcomes your comments, please visit our blog [here](#), our Facebook page [here](#) and Twitter [here](#)!