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Dr. David Samson

Redefining Early Education through the Lens of Empathy and Identity

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Dr. David Samson

Redefining Early Education through the Lens of Empathy and Identity

Shweta Singh | The CEO Magazine

Entrepreneurial journeys often follow predictable arcs, education, corporate experience, and eventually the leap into business. Dr. David Samson's story, however, started in a very different setting. His leadership journey began in a classroom of a very different kind: a dance studio filled with young children, where he discovered that guiding curiosity, emotions, and imagination required a deeper kind of leadership than titles alone could offer. Today, as the founder of ID Preschool in Chennai, he is building an early childhood education institution rooted in creativity, emotional intelligence, and purpose-driven leadership.

Dr. David Samson

Founder
ID Preschool
in Chennai



The Making of a Leader

Long before he stepped into entrepreneurship, Dr. David's early professional experiences revolved around working closely with children. As a dance teacher for young students, he discovered that teaching was about far more than movement or choreography. Guiding children required patience, empathy, and an ability to understand emotions, qualities that would later shape his leadership philosophy.

At the same time, his involvement with Rotaract introduced him to leadership beyond the classroom. Serving in roles such as RYLA Chairman and Club President, he gained practical experience in organising teams, managing responsibility, and leading initiatives that created community impact. His contributions during this period were recognised with several leadership awards, reinforcing his belief that leadership is defined by the difference one makes rather than the title one holds.

His academic pursuit of psychology added another dimension to this evolving perspective. Studying human behaviour deepened his understanding of motivation, relationships, and emotional dynamics. The insights gained during this phase helped him refine his sense of purpose and laid the intellectual foundation for the work he would eventually pursue.

Building an Experiential Ecosystem

In 2014, Dr. David transformed his ideas about early childhood development into an institution with the founding of ID Preschool in Chennai. The school was built on a simple yet powerful belief about how children learn best:

“Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I
remember. Involve me
and I learn.”

Guided by this philosophy, ID Preschool focuses on experiential learning where children actively participate in the learning process. Rather than relying solely on book-based instruction, the school encourages meaningful play and interaction so that children can understand both academic and social concepts in a natural and engaging way.



At the heart of the institution is the idea of helping children develop their own identity—an idea reflected in the name “ID” itself, representing the development of identity at an early age. The preschool aims to create a safe and nurturing environment where children feel comfortable exploring, asking questions, and learning through reasoning. Equally important is the role of parents within this ecosystem, with the school creating a community where families can connect and support one another through shared learning experiences.

At the same time, the institution's broader vision extends beyond the classroom. ID Preschool seeks to become a leader in preschool education by creating what Dr. David describes as a “home-away-from-home” environment, one that offers children the best possible setting for growth while also building meaningful relationships with parents through early learning programs.

Supporting this vision is a strong emphasis on teacher development and training. The mission of the institution focuses on equipping educators with world-class teaching methods and continuous training, enabling them to unlock the potential of every child and nurture a lasting passion for learning.

Headquartered in Chennai, ID Preschool has steadily expanded its presence across several locations, including Zamin Pallavaram, Chrompet, Chitlapakkam, Pammal, Hasthinapuram, Kurinji Nagar Chrompet, Madipakkam, Madambakkam, and Kallakurichi. Serving children between the ages of 1.5 and 6 years, the institution works closely with both working and stay-at-home parents to provide a supportive foundation for early learning and development.

Leading with Empathy

At the core of Dr. David Samson's leadership philosophy is a deep belief in people, particularly the teams that bring an organisation to life. He shares, “We take care of our employees, and our employees will take care of you.”

This people-first approach has helped cultivate teams built on trust, loyalty, and mutual respect, reinforcing his belief that a strong organisational culture is one of the most powerful foundations for sustainable growth. As a first-generation entrepreneur, the journey has also been one of personal learning and resilience. Reflecting on the experiences that shaped his outlook, Dr. Samson describes leadership as something that emerges from empathy and lived experience. He says,

“Only if you work hard will you know the pain. Only if you know the pain will you understand others' pain. Only if you understand others' pain will you become a good leader.”

For him, leadership is ultimately less about authority and more about understanding people, taking responsibility, and building something meaningful that extends beyond individual success.

Impact Beyond the Classroom

As Dr. David continued to build his work in early childhood education and community initiatives, creativity increasingly became a defining element of his approach. His people-centric ideas and initiatives began drawing attention beyond his immediate circles, leading to features in prominent publications such as The Times of India, The Hindu, and Deccan Chronicle. For him,



these moments of recognition served less as milestones of visibility and more as affirmations that his work was moving in the right direction.

As a first-generation entrepreneur, the journey has demanded persistence, discipline, and a willingness to navigate challenges independently. Over time, his efforts have been acknowledged through several national recognitions, including a record in the India Book of Records for leading India's Largest Book Donation Drive as Chairman, as well as recognition from the Kalam Book of World Records for organising the Largest Premium Award Ceremony. His contributions have also been honoured with awards such as Best Entrepreneur of the Year and Best Preschool of the Year, along with an Honorary Doctorate in the field of Education.

Among his various initiatives, Project KARPI, India's largest book donation drive, remains particularly meaningful to him. He says, “Project KARPI – India's Largest Book Donation Drive, which earned recognition from the India Book of Records, remains my most meaningful achievement as a leader. The books were donated to government schools, NGOs, juvenile homes, and orphanages, and that impact feels very close to my heart.”



The Next Phase of Growth

The preschool sector, according to Dr. David, is gradually evolving beyond its traditional perception as a care-based service. Over the next three to five years, he sees the industry moving toward a more structured foundational education ecosystem, where institutions play a critical role in shaping a child's long-term learning journey.

"Parents today are seeking continuity, from preschool to primary school and beyond. We want to offer a seamless transition with consistent values and a clear learning pathway that supports a child's academic, emotional, and social development from the early years into formal schooling," he explains.

This shift is likely to encourage integrated preschool-to-school models in which curriculum depth, teacher capability, and outcome-driven learning take centre stage. In such an environment, institutions that prioritise strong governance, child safety systems, and transparent communication with parents will be better positioned to build long-term trust.

At ID Preschool, the next phase of growth is being shaped by a philosophy of strengthening the foundation before pursuing scale. The organisation continues

to invest in teacher training, emotional learning frameworks, operational standardisation, and deeper parent engagement to ensure that every centre delivers a consistent experience.

Growth, in his view, must remain firmly people-centric. Institutions scale successfully only when the teams behind them grow as well. By investing in employees, leadership development, and an empathetic workplace culture, the organisation aims to build a model that is both resilient and sustainable.

For Dr. David, education ultimately extends beyond business metrics. It remains, in his words, "a long-term social commitment", one that shapes not only institutions but also the generations they serve.

A Manifesto for Future Educators

For those looking to enter the preschool education space, Dr. David believes the first step is to understand the responsibility that comes with it. The industry, he emphasises, cannot be approached purely as a business opportunity.

“The preschool industry is not a business you enter because it looks profitable on paper. It is a responsibility you accept, because you are shaping lives at their most sensitive stage.”

In his view, intention must come before investment. Infrastructure, branding, and curriculum may be important, but what ultimately defines the experience for a child is the environment they grow in and how they are made to feel. Understanding children, he notes, requires presence and observation, spending time in classrooms, watching how they respond, interact, and learn.

Trust, he adds, is equally central to the relationship between institutions and families. Parents, he believes, are not simply choosing a school; they are choosing a place they can trust with their child's early development. Transparency, consistency, and honest communication are therefore essential to building long-term credibility.



At the organisational level, Dr. David stresses the importance of building systems rather than relying on individuals. Processes around safety, training, communication, and learning outcomes create stability and protect the institution's values as it grows. At the same time, he believes that the true strength of any preschool lies in its educators. When teachers feel respected, supported, and emotionally secure, children naturally thrive in that environment.

Expansion, he cautions, should never come at the cost of maturity. Many preschools struggle not because of a lack of demand, but because they scale before

establishing clarity in culture and systems. Perfecting one centre, one culture, and one learning environment, he believes, must come before expansion. For him, preschool education goes far beyond entrepreneurship. It is, at its core, leadership at its most human level, where impact is measured not only in institutions built but also in the lives shaped along the way.

"If your long-term vision is only revenue, this industry will exhaust you. But if your vision includes impact, empathy, and purpose, preschool education will shape you as much as you shape it. This is not just entrepreneurship. This is leadership at its most human level," concludes Dr. David.