



DEVELOPING CREATIVE AND LIFELONG LEARNERS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

In a narrow concept of learning we associate it with formal mode of imparting education at school, college & university etc. But in comprehensive view learning is a lifelong process which starts right from birth and ends with death. It is a continuous process. Child is told, from an early age, that he should get good formal education for his better adjustment and survival in the society. Education opens the way to maximize our potential to find better, more satisfying jobs, earn more and, perhaps, become more successful in our chosen career. However in a broader view 'schooling' is only one type of learning. There are many other ways and opportunities to enhance our knowledge and develop the skills & creativity we need throughout life. Undoubtedly, Education plays an important role in Development of a society. A developed society always need its citizens well knowledged, skilled and with a professional attitude for smooth running of same. Educational institutions train young generations by channelizing their energy in various directions and fields and turning them a valuable human resources for the society and nation. But irony is that this kind of education limits them to a particular area of earning money and other aspects of life are ignored. Innovations and creativity aspects of learning get missing which is much needed for development of self and society. Lifelong learning is about creating and maintaining a positive attitude to learning both for personal and professional development. This paper is an attempt to throw light on different ways to create and promote an environment of lifelong learning in institutions resulting developing professional communities.....

Key words: *Life Long Learning, creativity, professional community*



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Introduction

Education and Learning

Learning may be defined as the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught while education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school, college or university. Education often takes place under the guidance of instructors and teachers. Education is often considered to be formal but some time may be Non formal or Informal. Formal education takes place in a structured environment; multiple students are educated under a certified, trained teacher in one classroom. While Learning can occur consciously and unconsciously. Learning is not limited to a certain age or period in life; we learn throughout our lives. Learning is not listening and accepting what we are taught, but understanding and experiencing them too.

Life Long learning

Lifelong learning is now - a -day one of the most important competencies that people must possess as it is now recognized by educators, governing bodies, accreditation organizations, certification boards, employers, third-party payers, and the general public. Promoting lifelong learning as continuous, collaborative, self-directed, active, broad in domain, everlasting, positive and fulfilling, and applicable to one's profession as well as all aspects of one's life has emerged as a major global educational challenge. Meeting this challenge will require changes in the way teachers teach and learners learn, as teachers take on a more facilitative role and learners take more responsibility for setting goals, identifying resources for learning, and reflecting on and evaluating their learning. The concept of lifelong learning is not new, on the contrary. However, fast and unexpected changes in our everyday lives, demands as regards flexibility at work (if one has got a job) as well as flexibility as regards being prepared to submit to new conditions and enter into new communities in a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world have put a renewed demand on the need for lifelong learning. This view finds for example support in the Delors report (Delors 1996) where lifelong learning is defined as follows:

Lifelong learning may be broadly defined as learning that is pursued throughout life: learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places. Lifelong learning crosses sectors, promoting learning beyond traditional schooling and throughout adult life (i.e. post-compulsory education).

Lifelong learning and society

Society always needs its members with lifelong learning. The notion of the learning society underscores learning as an activity, rather than something tied to a specific place or an institutional setting. It emphasizes the social context, purpose and character of learning and its existence both inside and outside educational institutions. More importantly, the concept of the learning society highlights the exigency of learning occurring not only within, but also out of, and around, formal institutional settings. Social change and development has its connection with learning society.

Lifelong learning and creativity

If we truly want to see improvement for children of all ages, races and classes, we need to move away from rigid structures of teaching and assessing learning. We need to eliminate obsolete practices of imparting education and pave the way for creativeness and innovativeness. We need to create environments that allow children to experience the wonder of education, tap into their creative potential, and support lifelong learning in a broad range of subjects such as the arts, sciences and history. Mere delivery of some lectures in a passive classroom will not fulfill instructional and educational objectives. We need teachers who play multiple roles in the classroom — facilitator, cheerleader, supporter and guide—not only as a lead for learning transference. And we need to draw upon community-based or intergenerational resources to foster children’s cognitive, emotional and social development.

Lifelong learning and innovation

New ideas or Innovation often begins with that willingness to be creative in the way children are as they try things with confidence, not embarrassed or fearful about the potential consequences of being wrong or unsuccessful. We grow away from that as adults. From the first incorrect answer in school we begin thinking a little longer about whether we are right before we raise a hand to answer the next question.

Learning to innovate helps us grow and contribute as professionals, helps the organization improve, and directly contributes to better serving refugees. That’s because the innovation approach is collaborative and iterative. Solutions are not developed in isolation, but rather they engage refugees and other people of concern and stakeholders in finding possible answers, testing them out and refining them in a way that meets everyone’s needs.

That kind of process requires certain skills that can be learned, and the process itself can be quite an education. It is chaotic and full of uncertainty and almost never linear. Going

through it requires a certain mind set, and a willingness to leave one's comfort zone, take risks and have a little faith that the results will be worth it.

Developing professional Learning communities

Professional learning community may be defined as the group of professionals including teachers, students and contextually staff (esp. in special schools) getting together in a common platform and share things critically which must back them to make themselves a community.

Important features of a professional learning community

1. Shared Beliefs and understanding
2. Interaction and participation
3. Inter Dependence
4. Concern for minority views
5. Meaningful Relationships

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is

A group of four to six teachers or administrators

- That meets regularly
- And works between meetings
- To accomplish shared goals.

In this case, the shared goals should be something like

- To increase teacher knowledge, understanding and skill in differentiated instruction.
- To increase student motivation and achievement as a result to learn. You will be developing a classroom and school climate in which learning is more about increasing student understanding of a topic than about the good grades that result.

Professional Learning Community Framework covers the key characteristics and elements of effective professional communities across five domains:

- professional culture
- leadership
- focus on students
- focus on professional learning; and
- Performance and development.
- Discussing the five domains it comes out that collaboration, reflection and sharing of practice are elements of a strong professional culture, while the

area of leadership includes school leaders establishing a shared vision for an accountable learning community. When it comes to a focus on students, research suggests effective professional learning communities ‘make intelligent use of evidence to pinpoint areas needing intervention to enhance learning outcomes for all students’. In the area of professional learning, members of effective communities are constantly building their own capacity, drawing on research and ideas about better ways to teach. Finally, in the professional development domain. The individuals ‘review their performance in the light of standards for accomplished teaching and feedback about its impact’, which means they can set goals and pinpoint the PD they need to help achieve them.

A professional learning community that leads to continuous improvement in teaching practices and student outcomes does not just happen. It depends on a strong professional culture characterized by shared norms and values, a focus on student learning, collaborative approaches to work and reflective inquiry into teaching practices, as well as leadership that fosters and supports that professional culture.

Advantages of Professional Learning Community

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are formed in schools that are ready to take big strides in improving student learning. The PLC looks at student data, analyzes school systems, and examines all facets of student achievement. Together, the PLC focuses on the challenges of helping all students learn. Teachers create common outcome statements that show high expectations for student performance. They then research and decide on new teaching practices that will help reach those high levels of student achievement. While PLCs are set up to help students learn and grow, they also benefit teachers. Let’s take a look at some of the advantages of PLCs in schools.

Better School Community

Teachers have felt isolated in their classrooms for a long time, but in a PLC, they come together with all of their colleagues to discuss teaching efficacy. The vision of PLCs is to create an environment where inquiry happens collaboratively, decisions are made together, and instruction is planned across the whole community.

Deeper Teacher Commitment

Teachers in the PLC hold a great deal of responsibility, not just for their students but also for their colleagues. Collaborative teacher groups hold discussions about student achievement and data, model best practices for each other, research and implement new techniques, and accept feedback from peers. This work gives teachers the opportunity to be significant decision-makers in the school.

Student Success and Achievement

A guiding question in all PLC schools is “Are students learning what they need to learn?” This question is paramount for schools practicing PLCs because their goal is to improve student achievement. Every teacher is on a team that looks at data to inform them of current student achievement. As a group, they then create goals to improve that level and decide what evidence would show progress toward those goals.

Conclusion

In this fast growing era education system is passing through a transforming stage. A genuine need of innovative methods in teaching and learning has been felt. Practicability of learnt knowledge skill and attitude is a long lasting result of learning. This is a time to identify and fill up the gap between theory and practical. Present system of education is just preparing generations to get a job and comfort of life. Apart from it being a responsible member of society an individual has to render number of responsibilities. Professional and personal parts of learning must be continued throughout life. Teachers must prepare their students for this challenge keeping in view the dynamic nature of knowledge.

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