

A REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN INDIAN SCHOOL AT PRESENT SCENARIO

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Abstract

Learning cannot be made within the boundaries of institutions only in this technological age. It has crossed all the boundaries and entered in the virtual world with the help of digital media. The concept of professional learning community (PLC) is largely become the trend of today's traditional style as an alternative to education. In relation to its speciality and outcomes in various studies, it has been found to be a hope for any education system which has been aimed at improving and progressing the school culture and performance especially student achievement. The purpose of the study is to review the previous studies and to know the usefulness of PLC to improve the status of Indian education system.

Keywords: Professional learning communities, Indian education system, teacher Collaboration, student achievement.



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Introduction

India is a vast and prosperous country, socially and culturally. The history of Indian education began with the "Guru-kula" system. Later, this education system turned into a public schooling education system and became accessible to all. After the enactment of the Right to Education Act (RTE), education became mandatory and a right of children between the aged of 6 to 14 years. India's literacy rate is changing rapidly after the implementation of the RTE Act but quality of education remains at the worst level.

Our education system is trying to change the ancient traditional teaching methods to achieve today's qualitative advancement, which is an important effort to make intellectual, efficient, and capable person for overall development of the country.

In 2005, the formulation of NCF (National Curriculum Framework) helped to view learning as a profession rather than the process of transmission of the facts (NECRT, 2005, p, viii). The NCF emphasized use of community resources in education, integration of technology and e-learning in curriculum development and instruction. State Council of Educational Research

and Training (SCERT) and District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) were established to promote overall quality of teacher education and to arrange pre-service and in-service training opportunities for teachers.

Problem of Indian education system

Aser (Annual status of education report) report findings of 2018 on student achievement through light over the necessity of a kind of PLC in Indian public schools. He brought some shocking facts out like :

The Aser reading test assesses whether a child can read letters, words, a simple paragraph at std 1st level of difficulty, or a 'story' at std II level of difficulty.

- The percentage of all children in std III who can read at std II level has been climbing slowly over the past few years. This figure has increased from 21.6% in 2013 to 23.6% in 2016, and finally to 27.2% in 2018.
- Slightly more than half of all children enrolled in std V can read at least a std II level text. This figure has inched up from 47.9% in 2016 to 50.3% in 2018.
- By std VIII, the last year of compulsory schooling in India, children are expected not only to have mastered foundational skills but to have proceeded well beyond the basic stage. Aser 2018 data indicates that of all children enrolled in std VIII in India, about 73% can read at least a std II level text. This number is unchanged from 2016.
- The Aser arithmetic test assesses whether a child can recognize number from 1 to 9, recognize numbers from 10 to 99, do a 2-digit numerical subtraction problem with borrowing, or correctly solve a numerical division problem (3 digit by 1 digit).
- The all India figure for children in std III who are able to do at least subtraction has not changed much from 27.6% in 2016 to 28.1% in 2018. For government school children, this figure was 20.3% in 2016 and 20.9% in 2018. However, government school children in some states are doing significantly better with an increase of 3 percentage points or more over 2016. These includes, Punjab, Haryana, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Kerala.
- The proportion of children in std V across India who are able to do division has inched up slightly, from 26% in 2016 to 27.8% in 2018.
- The overall performance of std III in basic arithmetic has not changed much over time. Currently about 44% of all children in std VIII can solve a 3-digit by 1-digit numerical

division problem correctly while this figure has gone down from 2016 to 2018 in many states, government school children in some states show substantial improvements in the last two years: for example, Punjab (from 48% to 58.4%), Uttar Pradesh (from 25.5% to 32%), Maharashtra (from 32.4% to 41.4%), and Tamil Nadu (from 42.6% to 49.6%).

The RTE was implemented in 2010 and the first cohort of students to benefit from its provisions completed 8 years of compulsory schooling in 2018. Nationally substantial improvements are visible over this 8-year period in the availability of many school facilities mandated by RTE. The fraction of schools with usable girl's toilets doubled, reaching 66.4% in 2018. The percentage of schools with a kitchen shed increased from 82.1% to 91%, and the proportion of schools with books other than textbooks available increased from 62.6% to 74.2% over the same period.

With the exception of Assam, majority of schools in states in the north-east did not have library books available for students in 2018. While elsewhere in the country the mid-day-meal was served on the day of the visit in well over 80% of schools, this proportion was less than 50% in many states in this region. Upon completion of 8 years after the implementation of RTE Act, there was not much improvement in the achievement of the students as expected. Only structural changes in schools can not bring about change in students improvements. Recent studies have shown lack of quality in schools due to poor teacher's ability.

Azim Premji Foundation (2005) conducted a study based on performance of 876 schools in Karnataka. From this study, they found five factors which make positive changes in students learning. These are , presence of committed head teacher, active involvement of teachers, active involvement of parents, good school practices. They found some other factor which did not make changes in student's performances. These are, basic infrastructure of a school, teacher's profile and caste of teacher, proximity of teachers in schools, economic background of parents.

R.N.Sharma (2006) explains some of the problems of india's education. Children are separated from the social environment, teachers are unable to make connection of facts with children, intellectual isolation in schools, and schools as insular organization.

Ashok Desai (2012) conducted a study and found several problems of teacher education in India. Those are, short time period for teachers training , problem of practice teaching,

problem of supervision of teaching, faulty method of teaching, isolation of teacher's educational department.

These are some problems which are faced in Indian education system to achieve better results from public educational system. It is the necessary condition for 're-culturing' school in India beyond the 're-constructed' school. Studies from the Western education system that practiced PLC and it still continues as a long-term process, shows long-term results in the teacher's capacity to build community learning. A large number of researchers adopted this concept and put pressure on the Department of Education to bring such culture in schools.

Professional Learning Community

An innovative concept known as PLC is practicing in some educationally developed countries like America and Australia. This is considered an effective alternate form for managing the continuous growing needs of teachers and students and getting better academic results rather than the restructuring school system. PLC is a group of educators who regularly share expertise and work to improve teaching skill and academic performance of students.

The term learning community has taken on a variety of meaning in the literature. In improving school from within, Roland Barth (1990) described a community of learners as "a place where students and adults alike are engaged as active learners in matters of special importance to them and where everyone is there by encouraging everyone else's learning". He also explored the role of teachers and principals as learners and the importance of cooperative and collegial relationships as important aspect of community. In PLC professionals come together as a community to learn. In a more recent study, seashore (2003) and colleagues stated:-

By using the term PLC we signify our interest not only in discrete acts of teacher sharing, but in the establishment of a school-wide culture that makes collaboration expected, inclusive, genuine, ongoing and focused on critically examining, practice to improve student outcomes.

Garet, Porter Desimone, Birman and yooz (2001) carried out the first large-scale to determine the characteristics of effective professional development. The study was based on the responses of 1027 math and science teachers who previously participated in the federal government's Eisenhower professional development programme. These teacher reported

characteristics of professional development , they felt increased their knowledge and skills and resulted in a change in their classroom practice. PLC is an improved teaching culture with a focus on student learning, working on continuous teachers training with fullest anticipated collaboration for teacher empowerment.

Characteristics of PLC are :

- a) **Shared mission, vision, values, and goals** : educators in a PLC benefit from clarity regarding their shared purpose, a common understanding of the school, they are trying to create, collective, communities to help move the school in the desired direction and specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented and time bound (SMART) goals to mark their progress.
- b) **Focus of collaborative team on learning** : teacher in PLC work together to achieve common goals by being interdependent on team and also for which they are mutually accountable. The structure of the school has been aligned to ensure that teams have the necessary time and support for adult learning.
- c) **Structural conditions** : communities meet at least once a day or in a week. They may meet on a rotating basis classrooms, in the school library, cafeteria, or other place. Data, sepreted from many sources, is readily read and supplied in comprehensible formats.
- d) **Collective inquiry** : In a PLC teams constantly quation the situation, seek new ways of teaching and learning, test the method, and then consider the results. Creating shared knowledge of both current realities and best practices is an indispensible part of the decision-making process of each team.
- e) **Reflective dialogue** : it is described as those conservations that focus on teaching behaviours and learning outcomes to encourage teachers to discuss their teaching practices and collaborate on how they can be improved.
- f) **Peer support** : teachers go to meet each other to identify classroom practices by host teachers, take notes on the comments of host teachers, and later request to share the feedback.A colleague can go to another classroom to inspect quality teaching to learn new learning strategies.

The school's culture is changing with the development of PLC in the school environment, which is more effective than changing the structure of the school.

PLC in Indian School

We have already discussed the problems of current education system of India and understood that PLC can be better solution to overcome these obstacles. Now we have a question in our mind whether we can develop PLC in our schools? There are many problems in the Indian educational field to create PLC in schools. It is difficult to overcome most of the obstacles in Indian socio, political context. By removing these problems, we can create PLC in school and increase the quality of education. The major problems are :

- 1) **Rigid bureaucratic system:** Hierarchical bureaucracy is found in Indian education. From state level to school level, several officials are working in hierarchies such as DIET (District institute for education and training) principal, BRC (Block resource centers), BEO (Block education officer) and school head master so on. Every officers should responsible to obey their higher officers but the higher officers do not ready to drop their authority. This makes the problems of trust between members of organization, which is precondition for a learning community (Lowis, 2006). This is a top-down leadership model, but the shared leadership model will be in effective PLC.
- 2) **Ego problems between teachers :** Occasionally, due to ego some teachers do not feel good to discuss with their junior teachers. This reduces the trust between them and build of PLC is not successful.
- 3) **School size :** In India most high school and some elementary schools are too large. In large schools it is difficult to increase strong identity with whole school community (Huberman, 1993), so it will be difficult to build trust between among the teachers. Many Indian elementary schools do not have enough space to gathering people, so in both cases the creation of PLC is difficult.
- 4) **Subject based stereotyping :** It is also commonly seen among teachers who are teaching subjects like social science, history and environmental science unlike mathematics and science are not considered as intelligent teachers (History teacher, kannur higher secondary school, Kerala). Thus, there is a lack of cooperation among those teachers and they do not share about their subjects. This is a major hindrance in the creation of PLC in schools.
- 5) **Punctuality :** At present, teachers have many responsibilities in school life. They have the responsibility of collecting data's about their student's recording it and presenting it to

their higher officials. That's why they do not get much time for such organized learning. There are another several problem like lack of communication, frequent transfer of teacher, grouping among teachers in indian education system for creating PLC in India.

Conclusion

There are several problem in Indian education system for the production of better education. Teachers have the key role in child's learning. Teachers are facing several major problems like, lack of teaching knowledge, lack of awareness of school culture, and problem of pediatric practices. PLC is a new method that has been successfully implemented in many countries. Instead of reconstruction of the school system, PLC will be an alternative solution to solve these problems when many issues are discussed, work in collaboration, share thoughts and experiences, then solving problems is done at school, it helps in improving knowledge and improves their experiences in classrooms. There are several hindrances in Indian education system which obstruct the creation of PLCs. If we really want to improve our education system then it is necessary to try this system in Indian context .

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