Transformative Education and Social Change

A Theoretical Analysis

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Abstract

Education is a product of the society and educational goals arise out of the needs of the society. With increased influence of globalisation, modernisation and digitalisation, the educational goals need to be constantly revised and reinterpreted to enable the students fit better and adapt themselves better in the rapidly changing global society. Yet, the general notion is that schools are not catering to the needs of the learners. This could be because of our lack of perception on what could be and should be the function of education in the post-industrial information society. Going by the fact that education is the social process through which society is reconstructed, this research paper analyses the slow but sure shift in the educational goals which have been happening in the country and across the globe. This research paper analyses the new ideas and reforms that have emerged in understanding school as a learning organisation. The paper discusses the importance of school leadership and teacher leadership in transforming schools, the subsequent changes in the classroom structures and processes with emphasis on improving teaching learning processes, the importance of technology in school improvement, significance of doing away with isolation and moving towards networking and collaboration and finally significance of systems thinking in promoting school improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a product of the society. It is a process through which

society transmits its accumulated values, knowledge, skills, attitudes and customs from one generation

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to another and influences how an individual thinks, feels and acts (Mortimore, 2013). Educational goals arise out of the needs of the society of which the individual is a member (Patil, 2012). Every education system wants to produce a certain kind of human being who will be able to adapt to the changing society. Educational goals therefore need to be reinterpreted and revisited in a changing society so as to ensure that the students are in tune with the changing social ethos, social structures, and organisations so as to enable them fit better in the society. John Dewey (in Ryan, 1995), while elaborating the function of schooling in a democracy, suggested that the school has a role in transmitting the dominant culture of the society. The school plays the role of an agent of social progress.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Educational goals need to be revisited and reinterpreted so as to enable the students fit better in the everchanging global society. Placing the school as the epicentre of change, the author attempts to describe the new ideas and perspectives in understanding school as a learning organisation, and what is the small and significant step that needs to be taken towards school improvement. The research paper takes into consideration the changing roles of the school leaders, the changes in the classrooms structure and processes, and also the changes in the system as

a whole. The research paper attempts to emphasise that these shifts in ideas of school as a learning organisation has come upon because of the rapidly changing society and because of the huge influence of globalisation, modernisation and digitalisation which has in turn influenced the educational goals.

THE 'CRISIS OF PERCEPTION' IN EDUCATION

The environment within which education is embedded has been changing at an increasing rate since 1900 (Brett, 1992). Yet there is a pall of disquiet evident in the following quote in the NCF-2005, "the school system has come to be characterised with a kind of inflexibility that makes it very difficult to breathe fresh life into it; learning for children seems to have become a sort of isolated and perfunctory activity which they are unable to connect in any organic or vital way with the rest of their life" (Position Paper, National Focus Group on Aims of Education 2.1, 2006). The truth is that a sense of concern has crept into the educational system that it is not catering to the needs of the learners. The reason could be as Banathy (1988) labelled our 'crisis of perception' in education our lack of perception and vision of what could be and should be the function, the substance and the form of education in the post-industrial information society. Though we have been struggling to come out of this malady, the effort has met with little

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success possibly as Banathy (*ibid*) puts it because of the piecemeal, or incremental approach; a discipline-by-discipline study of education; and a reductionist orientation.

According to Eisner, 2002, the paradox of our schools is that our schools now educate much more children that it did a decade ago. Yet the general notions remain that our school does not work well. Our schools currently are not in tune with the expectations of the society. This is because we do not have the vision of education that serves as the ideal for both the practice of schooling and its outcomes. We are not clear what we are after. Aside from literacy and numeracy, what do we want to achieve? What are our aims? In short, what kind of schools do we need?

The traditional task of the schoolsto prepare the young for a satisfactory life in the society-will have to be reinterpreted to cope with both the increasing demands for professional careers and the qualifications and experiences needed for survival in a 'do it yourself economy' (Handy, 1995). Many of the competencies needed for the above tasks are quite new which include to take initiative in responsibly shaping the conditions of one's life; actively to create satisfactory relationships; to engage in meaningful activities even without integration into a 'proper job'; to generate test and utilise knowledge; to pause and reflect on the stream of events and to deal constructively with time pressure and information overload. (Posch, 2000).

Going by the fact that education is the social process through which society is reconstructed and that one has to have faith in the ability of education to teach people to develop a vision of a better society and prepare the young for a satisfactory life, slow but sure shift in the educational goals have been happening in the country and across the globe. The following paragraph outlines these shifts.

Shift from the Industrial Age Schools to Approaches Designed for Information and Global Age

The industrial revolution brought about the notion of mass society and mass production that had a debilitating effect on the qualitative humane dimension or of life. Adhering to the industrial revolution, schools adhered to the factory model which meant — standardisation. synchronisation, specialisation, centralisation and bigness. Industrialisation and standardisation isolated the unique elements of human life. Being different was considered as being eccentric, and uniqueness was not respected. The outcome was large class size, little teacher-student interactions and impersonalisation of the children, and a kind of instruction which was designed to a 'one size fits all' agenda. Every child was supposed to adhere to a certain set of norms and standards proposed by the school. Howard Gardner in his book 'the Unschooled mind' quotes' "Yet as if guided by an invisible hand, schools

all over the world have come to exhibit certain predictable features. They focus on the introduction of complex symbolic or notational systems that require sustained concentration over long hours for mastery and that therefore are unlikely to be picked up simply by observing competent parents or other elders or masters at work in the society. Regular drill, rote memorisation and recitation are featured. The ultimate utility of these skills is not an important concern of day-to-day schooling, and indeed, in contrast to apprenticeships, the school experience is marked by an extreme dissociation from important events or palpable products in the life of the community" (Gardner, 2011).

The factory model of schooling is being shadowed by a more progressive perspective of schooling that is leading towards a more developmental approach to schooling and student learning. There is a shift towards the organismic model (Reese and Overton, 1970), which stresses more on interaction and development of the individual. More and more initiatives are being taken in this regard wherein experience is being given a lot of importance than training to rather bring about changes in the learner. This approach also encourages looking at the interrelationship between the personal and social dimensions for bringing about changes in the individual. This approach has emphasis on the quality and process of change. In the organismic view, the

organism makes judgments, thinks, feels, has choices, takes actions, reflects, learns from experiences, plans future learning and prioritises goals (Askew and Carnell, 1998). The kind of methodology here would entail less of teacher talk and more of students reflecting and discovering learning. The teachers would give students the freedom to think, reflect, inquire and discover rather than indulge them in a monologue of teacher talk. The emphasis is more on learning here rather than instruction.

With advances in technology and modernisation, there is a clear need to develop among the children those basic skills and competencies that would be closely relevant to their jobs which they would take up later on as adults.

Thus, greater thrust is being provided to approaches that are more students centred and enable the students to attain knowledge at higher levels of cognitive rigour and also ensure that the knowledge is practical to ensure all round development and have scope for enabling the student adapt to the evolving society.

Recently, a synthesis of theories and approaches adapted from social, cognitive and humanist learning theories have resulted into a category referred to as 'Cognitive Humanism', (Prickel, nd). Cognitive humanistic theory consists of an integration of the core components of cognitive learning, social learning and learner centred humanistic principles and is

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an attempt to create learners of the 21^{st} century.

Emphasis on Globalisation, Localisation and Individualisation - A Triplisation Paradigm

According to Cheng, (2000),globalisation, localisation and individualisation are core to educational reforms in the new millennium which is the New Triplisation Paradigm.

The term 'Globalisation' refers to the transfer, adaptation and development of values, knowledge, technology, and behavioural norms across countries and societies in different parts of the world (Brown, 1999; Brown and Lauder, 1996; Water, 1995). Globalisation in education can be brought about through web based learning, use of the Internet in teaching and learning, international exchange visit programmes and sharing through video-conferencing across countries, communities and individuals. The schools and the school heads need to be in tune with the new millennium aims and goals of education. The school heads and learners need to be equipped with sound knowledge on information technology so as to prepare themselves for the future. Thev need to be aware of the intellectual discourse happening globally and new age thrust and policy initiatives in the area of education especially in realm of teaching and learning. Thus, encouraging schools towards global networking is definitely an asset for the schools in moving towards the 21st century. This would provide scope for the school heads, teachers and students in pooling of international resources and intellectual assets and initiatives from different parts of the world to support the teaching learning process. The pursuit of new vision and aims at different levels of education, life-long learning, global networking, international outlook, and use of information and technology are just some emerging evidences of the third wave (Cheng, 2001).

Localisation, the on other hand, refers to the transfer. adaptation development of relevant knowledge, values. technology and behavioural norms from and to the local contexts. Currently, there is considerable importance given to localisation in education it would initiate community as and parental involvement in education; school home school collaboration, assurance of school accountability, implementation of school based management, school based curriculum, and community related curriculum, and development of new curriculum content related to local developments in technological, economic, social, political, cultural learning aspects. With and localisation, education will be able to meet local needs, involve community support, procure local resources and promote site level initiatives (Cheng, 2003).

In the case of individualisation, the challenge is to individualise

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teaching and learning process to meet the individual needs of the learners to cope with the multiplicity and complexity in human nature through measures like individualised learning targets, encouraging selflearning, self-actualising and self-With individualisation, initiating. education reforms can meet the needs of students, teachers and schools; motivate them to develop their potentials. Thus, globalisation, localisation and individualisation are core to educational reforms in the new millennium which according to Cheng, 2000, is the New Triplisation Paradigm.

SHIFT IN LEARNER'S EXPECTATIONS FROM SCHOOLS AND CONSEQUENTLY CHANGES IN TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS

The concept of individualisation generated by the globalised society has resulted in increased emphasis being placed on personal development and self fulfilment in students and young people. The students themselves have realised the importance of being exposed to meaningful activities in classrooms. As a result, activities that are not experienced immediately as meaningful are opposed by many children (Posch, 2000). What do the children want from their schools- the answer they tell us is community, working in groups, doing projects, having the opportunity to share their ideas with their peers and hear what their peers have to say, being challenged, being asked interesting questions, being listened to, being respected (Prensky, 2007).

EMPHASIS ON COOPERATIVE LEARNING

It has been understood that learning in groups has its impact on the emotional, social and cognitive dimensions of learning. By group learning we have infinite opportunities improve our knowledge bv to discussions with others and through hearing alternate perceptions. Group learning also provides for ample reflections on ourselves viz., our preferred role whether we lead or let the others take the lead, how we react to feedback and how we deal with conflict. The organismic view discussed world earlier collaborative learning encourages as collaborative groups contain the potential for support, challenge and feedback; for learners to cooperate and collaborate (Askew and Carnell, 1998, pp 40). Samples (1992) argue that nature taught us to cooperate to learn-society teaches us how to learn to cooperate. He points out that in education, cooperation is usually a way of organising experience to have students perform better at school work. The superiority of cooperative over competitive and individualistic learning increases as the task is more conceptual, requires more problem solving, necessitates more higher level reasoning and critical thinking, needs more creative answers, seeks long-term retention and requires application of what is learned (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). Cooperative

learning has positive effects on academic achievement; development of higher-order thinking; intergroup relations, self-confidence and selfesteem of learners; development of social skills and the ability to take perspective of another (ibid Askew and Carnell, pp 43). According to Slavin (1990), the most useful effects of cooperative learning occur when there is a combination of group goals and individual accountability which ultimately leads to a shared vision. Sharing vision enables meta cognitive thinking wherein we reflect and reconsider our own thoughts and the reaction to them in a dynamic and creative way. Not just within classrooms, but cooperative learning is catching up at the systems level and organisation level also. Change in organisations is more likely to occur when individuals within organisation work toward shared goals and a shared vision. The perspective of members of organisations working together, sharing experiences and sharing learning leading towards shared goals and shared visions are new thoughts of networking in the global age.

SHIFT IN CLASSROOM STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

Globalisation and modernisation has brought marked shift in the area of teaching learning process. Schooling is no more primarily about creating workers and test takers, but rather about nurturing human beings (Wolk, 2007).

quoted in John Dewey's As 'Experience and Education', (1938, p 49): What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win the ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses her/his own soul?" In the current schooling experience, there is an attempt to make our schools places of joy. New pedagogies that are marked by joyful learning activities have gained importance and there is a lot of importance being given to active learning and joyful learning. This is in answer to the concerns of educationalists like Goodlad, 1982, when he said, "Boredom is a disease of epidemic proportionswhy are our schools not places of joy?" Through building capacity programmes that adopt reflection as a primary pedagogy, there are attempts to enable the school heads and the teachers to ponder over questions like 'what is the purpose of education? How do we help our children adjust well in the society? How would school as an organisation enable the learners to fit themselves to a 21st century society? How do we inculcate life skills among the children?' The responsibility to educate the whole child, mind, heart and soul is slowly gaining prominence.

LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THEORY OF CONNECTIVISM AND NAVIGATIONISM

As the world moves towards the digital age, there are different approaches to learning in the digital era.

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Connectivism proposed by Siemens (2004) is a theory aiming to provide a basis for examining how multiple of information aspects creation interact and evolve. The theory considers how people, organisations school and technology such as work collaboratively to construct knowledge, building on ideas that have merged since the introduction of widespread interaction and access to information through the internet. The central idea in the learning theory of connectivism is the continual expansion of knowledge as new and novel connection open new interpretation and understanding to create new knowledge. On the other hand, Brown (2006), proposed that the focus in the knowledge era should be on how to navigate the information and knowledge available through digital technologies rather than existing knowledge. Brown (2006) navigationism proposed arguing that there was a need to move from content driven teaching to a focus on information navigation skills which he saw as essential skills for students to learn in future.

EMPHASIS ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

School leadership as a construct is gaining global interest now- the early part of the 21st century. It had been in the shadows of educational administration and management until now but is slowly emerging out of its confines to establish itself as one of the *de facto* force behind school improvement. It is currently the answer to one of the fundamental questions raised by educationalists which is 'how do we improve schools?'

Many countries across the globe have identified school leadership the central lever in as school transformation. There is increased belief in the potential of the school heads to make a positive difference to their schools and also improve the educational outcomes (Harris, 2005). Researchers from the international fields of school effectiveness and school improvement have consistently highlighted the importance of leadership in generating better schools (Hargreaves et al., 1998; Hopkins, 2001; Sammons, 1999). Leadership has been shown to make a difference to the schools ability to improve by influencing the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching which takes place in the classroom (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001). According to Leithwood and Riel (2003:3), large scale studies of schooling conclude that the effects of leadership on student learning are small but educationally significant. Leadership has become centrally synonymous with school effectiveness.

It has come to be that the school head is the key player who can ensure the success of a school and play a major role in the school improvement. Their role has grown far beyond the administrator to that of a leader.

There is a lot of emphasis given to transformational leadership with focus on developing transformational leadership among the school heads to improve their schools. Transformational leadership derives its importance from the strong links between leadership and culture of the organisation (Dalin, 1996), where leaders have the potential to alter the cultural context in which people work. According to Leithwood et al., (1999), transformational leadership assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of the organisational members. Higher levels of personal commitment to organisational goals and greater capacities for those accomplishing goals are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity. An overview of research relating to transformational leadership has suggested that, taken face value, transformational at leadership is strongly related to positive perceptions of the head teacher's effectiveness, organisation level effects, and student effects (Leithwood et al., 1999).

According to Leithwood *et al.*, (1999), core leadership activities of transformational leaders are:

- Setting directions (includes vision building, goal consensus, and development of high performance expectations).
- Developing people (includes the provision of individualised support, intellectual stimulation and the modelling of values and practices important to the mission of the school).
- Organising (culture building in which colleagues are motivated

by moral imperatives and structuring, fostering shared decision-making process, and problem-solving capacities.

• Building relationships with the school community.

There is evidence to demonstrate a positive relationship between such transformational leadership approaches and school improvement (Leithwood *et al.*, 1999).

According to Mulford and Silins, (2010), to promote leadership practices that promote organisational learning in schools, the head teacher needs to work towards whole staff consensus in establishing school priorities which need to be communicated to students and staff so as to give a sense of overall purpose. The school head needs to create a vision among the school staff and students with respect to the development of the school and the direction to take things forward. The school head needs to promote an atmosphere of caring and trust among the staff. The school head teacher should support a school structure that promotes participative decision making, delegating and distributing leadership to encourage teacher autonomy for making decision. The head should promote intellectual stimulation among the staff by encouraging them to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with their students, facilitate opportunities to learn from each other. The school head needs to be a role model herself or himself to encourage continuous learning through her/

his own practice. The school head needs to set high expectations for staff and students to be effective and innovative and promotes a climate of collaboration. Thus, effective leadership tends to lead the school towards transformation and change.

EMPHASIS ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

In the 20th century, the increase in knowledge has outstripped our abilities to learn it all in a life-time. The need for greater informationprocessing skills has therefore received greater attention, and the teacher's role has shifted to some extent from information-giver to facilitator (Askew and Carnell, 1988). Few teachers, at least the smart ones, have come to realise that learning comes from passion and not discipline. Thereby, they are slowly morphing into the role of challenger, observer, guide and coach to their students (Prensky, 2007). The emphasis is more on learning rather than instruction than ever before. The strategy is to co-create a shared vision having the child as the centre, with responsibilities and roles clearly defined for the individual stakeholders concerned with the school, one of whom is the teacher. Teacher leadership has gained prominence and is being explored as a distributed phenomenon, as a form of social action, where teachers have both agency and authority to lead (Harris, 2004). Teacher leadership connects teachers and principals in their mutual mission: improving

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learning for students (Scherer, 2007). Teacher leadership is gaining prominence with due emphasis being laid on the professional development of the teachers through coaching and mentoring. There is a huge thrust on managing schools through collaboration and cooperation rather than linear hierarchy. Teachers are extending their reach beyond their own classrooms to their teaching teams. schools and districts (Danielson, 2007). Through teacher leadership, teachers have begun to prompt changes in their schools and extending their reach outside schools and to the community. It is an idea whose time has come. The unprecedented demands that are being placed on schools today require leadership at all levels (Danielson, 2007). By using the energy of teacher leaders as agents of school change, public education will stand a better chance of ensuring that 'every child has a high quality teacher' (Wehling, 2007, p14). The teachers constitute the single largest group in a school. They need to be encouraged to understand that they could be the leaders and the agents of change in their schools. Their vast resources need to be trapped by offering opportunities and guidance to develop their leadership skills and by promoting a school culture that respects their leadership. Thus, understanding the phenomenon of teacher leadership and developing in the teachers the attributes and skills required of teacher leaders

would definitely enable the school transformation become a reality.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Research established has that good school leadership definitely has a strong impact on teacher development. Most learning and development opportunities for teachers will inevitably occur in schools, whether through working alongside colleagues, through opportunities to reflect upon their own and others classroom planning and practices, through the quality of professional relationships and the attention which is given to their learning needs, through the quality of regular and responsive provision for learning and development by school leadership (Day, 2013). As mentioned under the section on school leadership, principals of schools play an important role in establishing the conditions, structures, cultures and climate for professional learning and development in their schools (Day, 2013, p 31). Quality of leadership affects teacher's individual and collective sense of efficacy and their organisational commitment (Ross et al, 2008). Successful school heads are those who consistently provide staff with opportunities to engage regular professional learning in activities, related to individual and organisational needs both within and outside the schools (Day and Leithwood, 2009; Day et al, 2011). Teacher engagement improves when the school heads attempt to identify the teachers' professional development needs which may change in accordance to school context and situations.

REDEFINING TEACHER EDUCATION COURSES

In tune with the increased significance being given to school leadership and teacher leadership, there is now increased expectation to redefine the initial teacher education courses to accommodate the principles of leadership. This idea goes with the perception that if student teachers of the pre-service teacher education courses are taught about leadership, then the student teachers coming out of these courses would have imbibed leadership traits that are apparently lifelong. Currently, the teacher education courses imbibe skills only within the framework of leading their students-and not leading beyond their schools. Teacher leaders to assume a leadership role, may need expertise in curriculum planning, assessment design, data analysis, and the like. They may also need to develop the abilities to listen actively, facilitate meetings, keep a group discussion on track, decide on a course of action, and monitor progress. These skills are not typically taught in teacher preparation programmes (Danielson, 2007).

According to Danielson (2007), teacher leaders need to move from their limited matrix within their schools and classrooms to across

the schools (neighbourhood schools) and beyond the schools (districts level). Teacher leadership connects teachers and principals in their mutual mission– improving learning for students (Scherer, 2007) and towards change.

EMPHASIS ON NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION — ESTABLISHMENT OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCs)

As already mentioned in the previous session on collaborative learning, the idea of networking within schools and across schools for knowledge sharing and problem solving has gained fervour. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) as an effective tool to alleviate isolation among teachers and school heads are also gaining prominence. According to the Glossary of Education Reform, Professional Learning Communities is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students (www.edglossary.org). Professional Through Learning Communities, teachers and leaders work together and focus on student learning (Fullan, 2003). It acts as shared forum where teachers work together to innovate and to improve their teaching practices. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process in turn leads to higher levels of student achievement (Dufour, 2004)

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Sometimes teachers tend to cling to something that works as 'the strategy' rather than continuously building better strategies and adding to their repertoire. The Nobel Prize winning psychologist Hebert Simon called this phenomenon as 'satisficing'- because it is a matter of being satisfied with whatever minimally suffices (in Tomlinson, 1995). PLC helps teachers get away from this 'satisficing' syndrome by giving them opportunities to discuss with their peer group and encourage them to continuously evolve and grow and innovate better and practical solutions and strategies to their teaching issues. According to Fullan, (ibid, 2003), Professional Learning Communities internal to a school should reduce the variation across classrooms with more and more teachers gravitating towards the best practices.

Emphasis on Networking and Collaboration – Team Building

For schools to succeed in improving student learning requires leaders' attention to a mutually supportive. multilayered, nonlinear, extraordinarily complex often competitive association of interrelated factors (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2010). The thrust is on school leaders and teachers to work as a team to build their schools. The idea is to develop a team of teachers with shared values and goals who are able to identify and solve problems

and collaborate towards student learning. The team should have a sense of collective responsibility accountability and for student achievement (Garmston, et al, 2012). This kind of culture in schools would lead to school dynamics of optimism towards growth and development. The focus is on creating a culture of openness, and trust, empowering teams to make decisions that improve student learning. In moving schools, collaboration is the key to success. (ibid, Garmston). It has become self-evident that schools in which faculty members feel a collective responsibility for student learning produce greater learning gains than do schools in which teachers work practitioners as isolated (Louis, Marks and Kruse, 1996). Working in teams invariably leads to creation of Professional Learning Communities. Louis research found school based, professional communities have greater potential to create teacher empowerment, personal dignity and collective responsibility for student learning.

Emphasis on School as an Open System and Developing a Systems Thinking

Developing a systems thinking would mean focusing on the whole, not just the parts; one that is synthetic, rather than analytic; one that integrates, rather than differentiates (Bretts, 1992). This would mean that all programmes of the school are aligned with the larger goals and processes of the system concerning school improvement, student performance, efficiency and enhanced and effectiveness (Schleicher, 2012). This would also mean viewing school as an open system open to change and transformation in accordance to the changing intellectual discourse happening across the globe. This has huge implication with respect understanding school to as а learning organization and viewing the school head and the teachers as the change agents; inter-linkages between schools and communitythe emergence of whose links has implications for the concept of learning, which can include the production of local knowledge and activities to shape the conditions of life in the changing society (Posch, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Thus, there are shifts in the approach to school and to education *perse* which is surely creating a ripple effect on the educational goals at the indigenous and global level. An analysis of these shifts would definitely enable one to understand the transformations in the area of education with respect to the constantly changing society.

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