

Journey from Teaching to Learning through Professional Learning Communities

Role of School Leadership

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Abstract

Teacher Education in the country calls for revolutionary changes. The centrality of teacher and the need for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has been the focus in many policy documents. However, the cry for quality teachers continues. Developing teacher capacity is critical; it requires a fine blend of pedagogical skills and competencies, knowledge, attitude, positive learning, organisational conditions and culture, and above all, a reflective dialogue leading to lifelong learning and passionate rendering. The author in this paper deliberates on the idea of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), making teachers responsible and aware about their own professional development and developing teachers as reflective practitioners through the formation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The paper also shares the role of heads of schools in initiating PLC in school, and amongst schools at the cluster level, thus empowering teachers through academic leadership, gradually moving towards whole school improvement.

INTRODUCTION

If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom did not want to be there

and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then they might have some

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conception of the classroom teacher's job' (Donald D. Quinn). Teaching is one of the most demanding vocations in the world. Excellence in schools depends upon its teachers (Education for National Development, Indian Education Commission 1964–66) and their individual and collective capacity, and its link with school-wide capacity for promoting pupils' learning. Educational systems the world over recognise the importance of teacher and teacher development. Capacity building in particular has been promoted in national flagship programmes like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)* and *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)*. The Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE) has also emphasised the centrality of teachers and teacher development. Huge amounts of centralised funds to the tune of approximately 200–500 crores under RMSA and SSA respectively, are spent annually for teacher training (Annual Work Plan and Budget 2016–17). However, more than 15 years after the inception of the SSA and more than 10 years after the publication of the *National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005*, its vision is still a long way from being translated into most classrooms. The question being, where did all the training go? What did the training actually train teachers in? Why do we find a gap between teacher training and its classroom implications?

The *Fourth Policy Forum Dialogue* (NCTE 2012) reports some of these lacunae in in-service Teacher Education and professional development.

- The current training approach is fragmented, often leading to a situation that teachers repeatedly attend the same training programme year after year. Consequently, training often does not lead to capacity enhancement or content enrichment, or result in enhancing motivation levels of teachers to bring about changes in classroom practices.
- It is so mechanistically determined and organised in a top-down cascade process, thus de-contextualising and raising issues on conceptualising pedagogy as a mere collection of skill sets or knowledge.
- It is not the lack of good intentions, efforts, investment on teacher training programmes; it is about teachers taking positive steps towards improving their professional practice through the analysis of educational outcomes, meaningful feedback, self-assessment and desire to be a community of lifelong learners.

A comprehensive teacher development programme analysing the complete lifecycle and development path of the teacher, right from initial teacher preparation, selection and induction to becoming a teacher is still missing. The policies for different stages of Teacher Education are

largely seen as individual entities. Pre-service and in-service institutions and educators are neither the same nor in a sustained dialogue so as to be able to establish some kind of parity. Thus, the issue of building an effective model/mechanism that would make teachers take charge of their own professional journey and provide them avenues for it still remains unresolved.

Put together, it calls for a need to collaborate for a common purpose, giving individuals, groups, and whole school communities and systems the power to get involved in and sustain learning over time. In the words of the Bordia Committee (2010), it would be based on the principle of centrality of teachers making them the key movers for their own development. Developing professional learning communities (PLCs) appears to hold considerable promise in this perspective, it is voluntary and totally governed by the community of professionals than by authorities of power.

FROM 'PREPARING TEACHERS' TO 'BECOMING A TEACHER': A JOURNEY OF SELF DEVELOPMENT

As a student, I struggled with lot of concepts in school and literally rote memorised them for exams. When I grew up to be a teacher, I learnt the same concepts on my own and wondered why I could not get something so simple as a child. On discussion with peers, I realised this was virtually true for all of us who were into teaching. This made it

apparent that teaching is one of the ways of learning; in fact, a better way of learning. It also told me that as a teacher, it was my need to appeal to the minds of the learners, understand their perspective, match my frame of reference with theirs and think, plan and look at a concept from multiple views so as to be able to reach the minds of my students. This attitude of taking charge of one's learning and viewing a concept from multiple angles appeared to be a sure-shot method of learning. I realised that as a teacher, I had taken charge of my learning, out of my need to reach my learners, unlike what I did as a learner. Thus, in a way, I was able to deconstruct the idea of 'teaching' and 'teacher'. Pedagogy, now, was not a given set of tools and techniques but a process of discovering and rediscovering the self and its engagement with the content, so as to reach out to the children. If this is true for young learners, it has to be equally true for adult learners as well. Later as a Teacher Educator, I realised that the entire approach in teacher preparation from pre-service to in-service was very reductionist, top-down and in a way not engaging the teachers in their own developmental journey. I found that in schools, the tilt is towards content, and in Teacher Education, the tilt is towards pedagogy. But in both cases, the individual faculty of the learner somewhere got lost in the overemphasis on either of the aspects.

'Becoming a teacher', I learnt is self-transformatory as against preparing teachers. It is an intrapersonal engagement, engaging with oneself as an individual, as a pedagogue, a learner, and a content expert and questioning and self-examining. It is a journey, a process of reflection, reformation and authentication, as against teacher preparation which is more predicative.

This is where the idea of reflective practice assumes importance, entrusting teachers as professionals capable of working towards their own development through the practice of reflection and, thus, capable of making a large number of instructional and classroom management decisions. Even in circumstances where the level of teacher preparation is low, this perspective believes in the potential of the teacher to challenge the rigid prescriptions and design their own contextual models of change, though some scholars challenge the notion that teachers in developing countries, with minimal preparation and resources, can reflect on practice and make informed choices.

Batra (2012), in the India Infrastructure Report emphasised the need for teacher development and teacher support rather than teacher bashing and teacher accountability. She also emphasised the need for focusing on improving the provisions that prepare teachers and develop them as critical thinkers and lifelong learners rather than just focus on

learning techniques of being effective with students.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES: ADDRESSING DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS

Considering the wide array of issues and challenges both in school and Teacher Education, it becomes imperative to engage and empower teachers through continuous professional development. The following are some of the many factors that establish the need and significance of Professional Learning Communities.

Diversity of Schools

Considering the diversity in location, size, boards, curriculum, contexts in which schools function and the resources available to the teacher, multiple models of pedagogic practices need to be generated. This means that a pedagogic requirement for addressing the large diversity in schools is an overarching challenge. A common model, approach or pedagogy in all kinds of schools and learning requirements will not suffice. Therefore, there is a need to devise multiple models, teaching practices and strategies, with flexibility in pedagogical arrangements and school cultures. Professional Learning Communities established at different levels can provide the required space for discussion, dialogue and reflection for evolving context-specific methodologies for teaching-learning in single teacher or two teacher

multi-grade schools, or in a double shift urban slum school, schools in conflict zones or those in extreme rural and tribal context.

Need-based Teacher Development

In India, the present practice of in-service education for teachers is largely characterised by a top-down model which is fund-driven rather than need- or outcome-driven. This approach is proving to be quite ineffective in bringing any visible improvements in school education. The teachers' professional development needs therefore have to be based on five types of assessment frameworks.

Students' assessment

Students achievement records should not just be used as their performance indicators, rather these should inform teachers on the common errors made by students, the learning difficulties, the hard spots in teaching or difficult teaching areas, the need for alternative pedagogies and above all answer deeper questions like—are we teaching what we intend to? What are students learning? Can there be better ways of teaching?

Schools could use the teacher-made achievement tests (internal tests of school) as also the standardised achievement tests (example: NAS, QMT) as a basis for identifying the teaching-learning gap and thereby gather input for professional development of teachers.

Teachers' assessment

Conducting learning rounds to make teachers a part of their own classroom observation, coupled with teachers' self-assessment can form a very important tool for identifying training needs. This would give a trend of the teaching-learning process in the school, thus bringing the teachers together as a community, through self-reflection and quiet time, unbiased observation, non-judgmental feedback and raising a lot of questions. It would help them identify their core strengths and limitations so as to work for improvement. Schools could also use the PINDICs (Performance Indicators for elementary school teachers) app for teachers developed by the NCERT.

Environmental assessment

This can include information on the school's work culture, environment, day-to-day organisation from teachers, students and administrative staff. While the leader of the school plays a very important role in developing the environment, it is the teachers and students who nurture it through their behaviours, classroom norms and practices.

Stakeholders' assessment

Focus group discussions with teachers, students, parents and School Management Committee (SMC) can be carried out to share mutual expectations and efforts required to meet the school's vision and goals. In this manner, all the efforts in

teacher development are not just for the individual, but in alignment with the school's needs and for collective and institutional development, thus making schools the units of change, and teachers, the change makers.

Overall school assessment in line with the school's vision, mission and goals

This includes mapping the school's progress with the help of School Self Assessment and School Development Plan (SDP), fixing responsibilities and setting accountability frameworks for objective assessment, and drawing synchrony between Personal Development Plan (PDP) and SDP. The Shala-siddhi framework developed by NIEPA (2015) is a comprehensive framework in this regards which covers seven key domains beginning from ensuring physical resources to teaching-learning processes, student achievement, teacher professional development, school leadership, inclusion and community participation. Perhaps, if schools actually use this comprehensive data to map the school needs and subsequently teacher needs, and collectively chalk out the path towards improvement, there is no reason they cannot be transformed into organisations of learning.

Ownership and Empowerment

Researches across the globe have sufficiently proved that it is the learners taking charge of their own learning which makes learning sustainable

and continuous. An integrated, holistic and comprehensive teacher development policy with a strategic implementation plan that recognises professional development as a lifelong process and empowers teachers for their own development is required. It recognises the importance of creating teacher networks primarily aimed at helping teachers facilitate change in the classroom. It would not just be about training, but about continuum of opportunities for teachers to improve their classroom practice; thus be responsible and accountable for developing themselves and others. This framework is based on the premise of assessment as learning and assessment for learning, and puts the heads of schools and teachers as key players in their own development.

PLCs: THE COMMUNITIES OF CONTINUOUS INQUIRY AND IMPROVEMENT

There is no universal definition of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs may have shades of interpretation in different contexts but there appears to be broad international consensus that it suggests a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way (Mitchell & Sackney 2000; Toole & Louis 2002); operating as a collective enterprise (King & Newmann 2001).

Hord (1997) blends the process and anticipated outcomes and defines

PLC as one in which the teachers in a school, and its administrators continuously seek and share learning and act on their learning. Their goal is to enhance effectiveness as professionals for the students' benefit. Thus, these could also be termed as communities of continuous inquiry and improvement. The notion therefore emphasises the potential of the community of professionals based inside or outside a school to mutually enhance each other's and pupils' learning as well as overall school development.

Seashore, Anderson and Riedel (2003) elaborate that 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. The hypothesis is—what teachers do outside the classroom can be as important as what they do inside in affecting school restructuring, teachers' professional development and student learning.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

COMMUNITIES: THE CONTEXT IN INDIA

In India, the idea of having PLC was first mooted out in the Indian Education Commission (1964–66) and later reiterated in the National Policy on Education (1986) through establishment of school complexes. The Central Board of Secondary

Education (CBSE) in 1987 brought the concept of 'freedom to learn and freedom to grow through *Sahodaya* School Complexes (SSCs)' which characterised SSCs as a voluntary association of schools in a given area, who through mutual choices, have agreed to come together for a systematic system-wide renewal of education process. In other words, as '*sahodaya*' signifies rising together, it identified six areas, to begin with, for collaboration amongst schools of its complex.

1. Educative Management
2. Evaluation
3. Human Resource Mobilisation
4. Professional Growth of Teachers
5. Value-oriented School Climate
6. Vocationalisation of Education

Through positive promotional efforts, the Board has helped schools come together and form an interactive and sharing relationship. At present, there are 260 such Complexes which are active throughout the country, and share and care for each other; particularly those which are in close physical proximity.

There has been a historical tendency in India (as in many other countries) to create sound policy and then either not implement it effectively (see, for example, Dyer 2000 on the problems of Operation Blackboard) or to neglect it at all (see, for instance, Juneja 2005 on RTE). A careful and systematic attention to meeting the needs of all kind and sizes of schools, and teachers and students

therein is therefore required in terms of both policy development and accompanying resource allocation for any policy to actually percolate in totality to the actual beneficiaries.

The fate of the concept of school complexes and PLCs as pronounced by Kothari Commission and NPE, 1986 also remained sealed; it however to a larger extent demonstrated good results through the functioning of the *Sahodaya* Complexes in CBSE schools in some parts of the country.

The *Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan (RAA)*, MHRD also has recommended the formation of 'Teacher Circles' for improving the teaching of science and mathematics. Teachers of science and mathematics in schools could be grouped by mentoring institutions in Teacher Circles at decentralised levels on a voluntary basis. The mentor institutions would endeavour to develop teacher capacities for teaching science and mathematics in new and empowering ways so as to render the experience of science and mathematics teaching in an engaging manner for children. Mentoring institutions would try to engage teachers as a community, with the depths and intricacies of specific subject details (science and mathematics) to propagate a culture of doing and creating knowledge through problem solving, programme and demonstration.

Revised SSA framework (2009) based on RTE clearly defines the roles of Block Resource Centre (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centre

(CRC) coordinators in academically supporting and strengthening schools in the block and cluster through regular academic supervision, monthly academic meetings and monitoring of school-based improvement. It also clearly defines the roles of DIETs in capacity building of the BRC Coordinators (BRCCs) and CRC Coordinators (CRCCs) in the district, providing pedagogical and content knowledge, connecting and collaborating with colleges of Teacher Education in the vicinity as also the existing administrative structures existing at the block and district level. The Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching has initiated grants to different Teacher Education departments and other institutes of higher education for improving the quality of teachers and teaching through effective teacher networks and study circles, the results for which are awaited.

DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

There is an organic link between teacher development and school development. However, in the Indian scenario, teacher development is seen as an independent act executed largely by the Teacher Education institutes that more often than not work in isolation. Once a trainee becomes a certified teacher, there is hardly any connection that the colleges of teacher education or university departments have with the

in-service teachers or schools, except for the DIETs and State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), that too, precisely with teachers in elementary schools. Thus, the teachers in the secondary and senior secondary schools are practically left out and live with a notion that being the senior most in the hierarchy, one does not require any exposure to learning. For developing schools as learning organisations, it is inevitable that each school challenges this compartmentalisation and hierarchy amongst levels and grades, and views school education holistically. Only then can we have the entire school community come together and learn from the practice of the other, through observation and reflection. It has been a common practice in the medical profession for a surgeon to be accompanied and assisted by colleague doctors and it is equally normal for a senior advocate or judge to be accompanied by other professionally novice lawyers and thus, master the art of the profession through careful observation and discussion of the practice of seniors. Such inquiry of practice is considered to be a professional norm which refines the practice of the seniors while giving substantial field expertise to the learners. Teaching seems to be the only profession where the professionals feel challenged in the presence of peers or fellow practitioners and find it derogatory to be questioned on one's practice thus leading to privacy

of practice. Somehow learning as equals, and the art of being non-judgmental in approach has not been established in the profession, leading to an environment of insecurity, lack of trust and fear of being rated or judged. This leads to isolation amongst the teaching communities. Richard Elmore, a leadership expert at the Centre for Learning at Harvard University states, 'Privacy of practice leads to isolation, and isolation is an enemy of improvement'.

The first step therefore towards the creation of a PLC is breaking this isolation. The head of the institution plays a key role in creating such an environment that breaks the professional silence and isolation, and nurtures a democratic and transparent culture. Further, build a climate of trust where practitioners feel comfortable in sharing and accepting their shortcomings and grey areas, and take charge of their own development.

PLC: THE NCSL EXPERIENCE

The National Centre for School Leadership (NCSL, NIEPA) works with principals from schools across the country in building capacities so as to transform functional managers into academic leaders. The design used for the programme is shown in Figure 1.

In this structure, the team from NCSL, through a ten-day residential capacity building programme handholds the school head through a process of personal transformation,

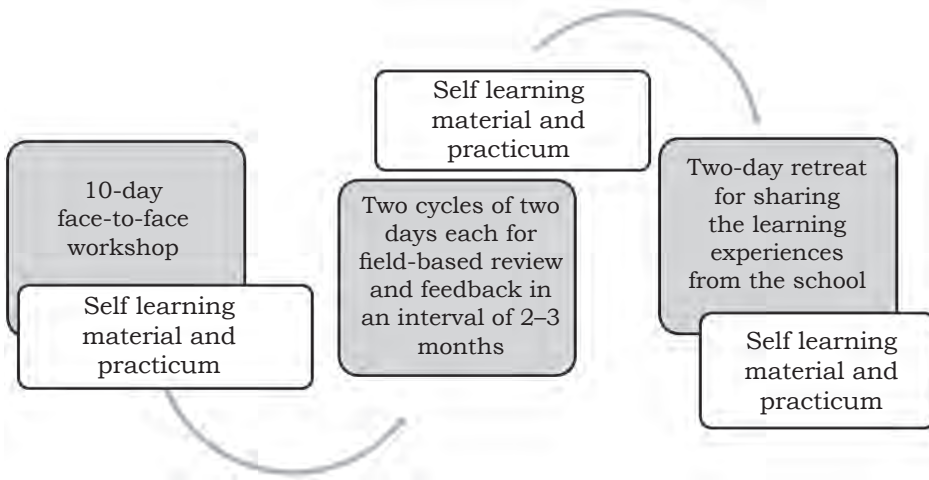


Figure 1. One-year learning engagement cycle

thus being able to lead in each of the fundamental roles of the head of a school. It begins from leading the self, the teaching-learning processes, leading innovation and change, teams and partnerships, and at the end, the overall organisational leadership. At the end of this ten-day residential workshop, every school head leaves with a transformative agenda and a draft School Development Plan which would be vetted with the stakeholders, thus developing ownership and collective commitment towards transforming schools.

Here the review and feedback workshops form the basis for understanding the role of each member of the community of professionals for their collective development. It brings people together, and motivates consecutive and consistent sharing. It also develops a feeling of trust and

breaks the isolation gradually. This eventually develops a democratic culture necessary for learning.

In the first review after three months, all school principals bring their experiences of what works, what does not, what was initiated and what was stopped, what was learnt and what was unlearnt and many other minute aspects. This is shared in a two-day extensive review through presentations and exhibition. This group of school principals is connected through a Google and WhatsApp group, and also meets frequently that is, weekly or fortnightly in their districts, thus continuing the learning cycle.

Such cycles of review are conducted every three months, apart from the online networking. While not all school principals that receive training become a part of the

learning community, those who join, bring a lot of learning experience and motivation. PLCs are thus voluntary communities, and it is the enthusiasm and passion to do, share and learn that drives the professionals.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY:
A CASE STUDY OF KATRAIN, KULLU,
HIMACHAL PRADESH**

The School Leadership Workshop coupled with the intrinsic motivation of the principals of the Cluster, the Deputy Director (Kullu district), and the passionate drive and academic guidance of the then District Commissioner, Kullu, intensified the leadership capacity building across the district and continued with regular district-wide monthly meetings of the school principals. This momentum gradually got picked up by the school principals of senior secondary schools across the Blocks and Clusters in Kullu. One such case is that of Shri Ghanshyam Kapur, Principal, Government Senior Secondary School, Katrain.

There are 17 Clusters in the district of Kullu, of which, Katrain is one. It has 17 schools, of which five are senior secondary schools, six are high schools and six are middle schools.

A careful study of the operation of this PLC brought to the fore the following observations that give an insight into the development and sustenance of PLCs. These could also be called the characteristics of PLCs.

**Passionate and Unrelenting
Pursuance and Leadership**

While NCSL initiated the community of principals into a democratic dialogue, demonstrating the process and practice of PLCs, it would not have been without the initiative and effort of the Cluster and school leadership that nurtured and sustained it. Of the 60 school heads trained at the State level from the 13 districts of Himachal Pradesh, not all responded equally. Only 38 joined for the consecutive meetings and few Blocks and Clusters of the districts like Kullu, Mandi, Bilaspur and Hamirpur continued later without any outside intervention for their own development through passionate leadership in their Block or Cluster.

Shared Values and Vision

Having a shared value and vision is found to be centrally important to a PLC (Andrews and Louis 2007) because individual autonomy is seen as potentially reducing teacher effectiveness. For schools to function as PLCs, it is necessary to develop shared values and vision as a school community and also a community of learners which would bring coherence in the team. All the schools in Katrain Cluster came together with a common vision of improving learning for students as well as teachers.

**Strong Focus on Instructional
Culture**

Improving learning for all was agreed upon by all Heads of Schools

(HoS) across the Cluster. To weave PLC around developing a strong instructional culture, Mr. Kapur began by conducting staff meetings in his school around teaching-learning gaps in different subjects and helped teachers decide targets for improvement in the next semester assessments. This eventually brought all the discussions focused around instructions and achievement data. This gradually continued to the Cluster meetings as well and all 17 schools eventually developed strong focus around instructions.

Use of Data for Sharing Observations, Feedback and Reflections

Schools are sopping with data in an era of data as a policy lever and a key deciding factor for most of the central funding. The chief question therefore is, should this data be limited to meet the purpose of external agencies or could it be more effectively used to develop an instructional focus and improve the quality of teaching-learning. The Katrain Cluster used the subject-wise data, the student-wise data, books and infrastructural data, parental participation data and much more to develop focused discussions and arrive at an action plan for each school which would then be followed up in the subsequent meetings.

Bringing all Stakeholders on-board for Whole School Improvement

Literature on PLC broadly agrees on the collective responsibility for student learning (King & Newman 2001; Kruse, Louis & Bryk 1995; Leithwood & Louis 1998). It helps to sustain commitment, puts peer pressure and accountability on those who do not do their fair share, and eases isolation (Newmann & Wehlage 1995).

Mr Kapur not only conducted meetings with the school staff and students, around the data but also with parents, some of whom only had degrees in primary or upper primary level and being a rich horticulture belt, they had actually engaged their children in the fields for economic benefits. These parents were sensitised through data on the efforts made by teachers during regular teaching hours and extra classes, the attendance records of their children, time devoted and their performance, promised to support the school in its efforts. This motivation became a learning for all schools in the Cluster. Stakeholder engagement which was erstwhile understood to be burdensome because of the strained relationship now attained new meaning because of ownership and collaborative relationship.

Reflective Professional Inquiry

Reflective dialogue (Louis et al. 1995), conversations on educational issues or problems involving the application

of new knowledge; de-privatization of practice (Louis et al. 1995), frequent mutual observation and case analysis, joint planning and curriculum development; seeking new knowledge all of these practices became the cornerstone of PLC at Katrain. Tacit knowledge of practitioners eventually started getting converted into shared knowledge through interaction (Fullan 2001) and applying new ideas and information to problem solving formed an essential character of professional exchange in PLCs. It also became non-negotiable for sustaining and thriving PLCs (Hord 1997).

Collaboration

This concerns staff involvement in developmental activities with consequences for several people,

going beyond superficial exchanges of help, support or assistance (Louis et al. 1995) for example, monthly review and feedback at Cluster level. Feelings of interdependence are central to such collaboration—a goal of better teaching practices would be considered unachievable without collaboration. This does not deny the existence of micro-politics, but conflicts are managed more effectively (Hargreaves 2003).

During the Cluster meetings initially, it was observed that the degree of participation of all Heads of Schools and teachers was varied. A strategy was worked out wherein the conduct of the monthly Cluster meetings would happen in each of the seventeen schools of the Cluster. The school in which the meeting

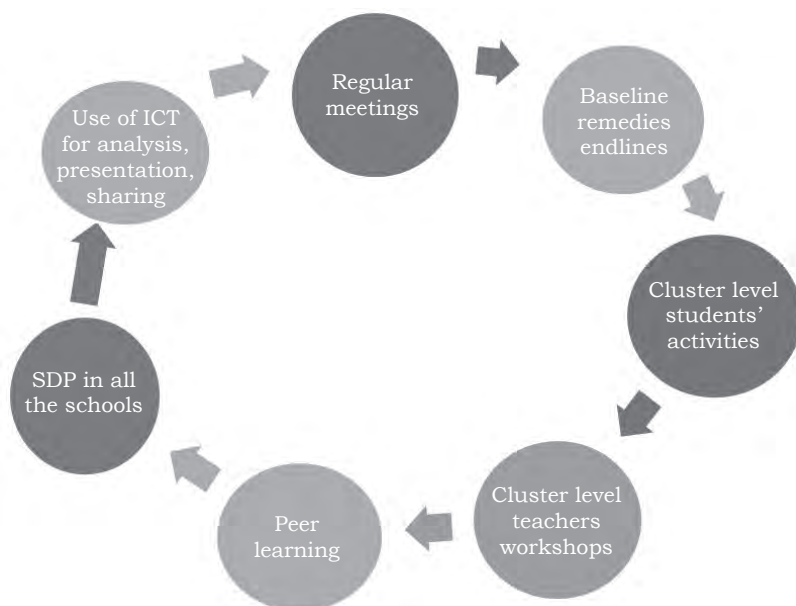


Figure 2. Strategy developed and used by the cluster for PLC with instructional focus

was held made arrangements for all the logistics, and the focus of the discussion for the day would particularly emphasise the quality in that school. In a way this structure compelled the participation of all, which eventually became motivating.

Thus, developing transparent mechanisms for sharing and reflecting would ensure building collective responsibility, where establishing one above the other or talking in binaries of right and wrong or good and bad is not important. What matters the most is how do we as the teaching community move ahead from where we are stuck.

Group as well as Individual Learning is Promoted

Professional self-renewal is a collective rather than a solitary happening. Collective learning is also evident through collective knowledge creation (Louis et al. 1995), whereby the school learning community interacts, engages in serious dialogue and deliberates on data, interpreting it commonly for all. In a nut shell, the school faculty, working as a PLC share a common understanding of how to go about getting to that vision.

When schools get organised into a professional community, the team sets higher expectations, improves pedagogy and relationships and performs significantly better (Louis and Marks 1998). The following was observed in Katrain Cluster as well.

- ***The teachers and head teachers set higher expectations for student achievement***

It was observed that teachers in Katrain conducted target-setting workshops with students, took them through their achievement data and helped them establish realistic goals for themselves. Initially, neither the teachers nor the students could achieve the goals or make them realistic but gradually they learnt through experience.

- ***The quality of classroom pedagogy changes considerably***

Schools in the Cluster changed the classroom arrangement from a column and row style (which compels the teacher to go on with the lecture and assume a more active and dominant role), to a cafeteria and seminar room arrangement where all are equal and have equal freedom to speak. This arrangement entails a change in the lesson plans and a more facilitative role on the teachers' side.

- ***The teacher-student relationship improves***

This happened as students get more chance to interact with the teachers and the cafeteria arrangement and group rotation system brought a cohesive feeling thus, supporting peers and teachers as well in achieving ambitious learning goals.

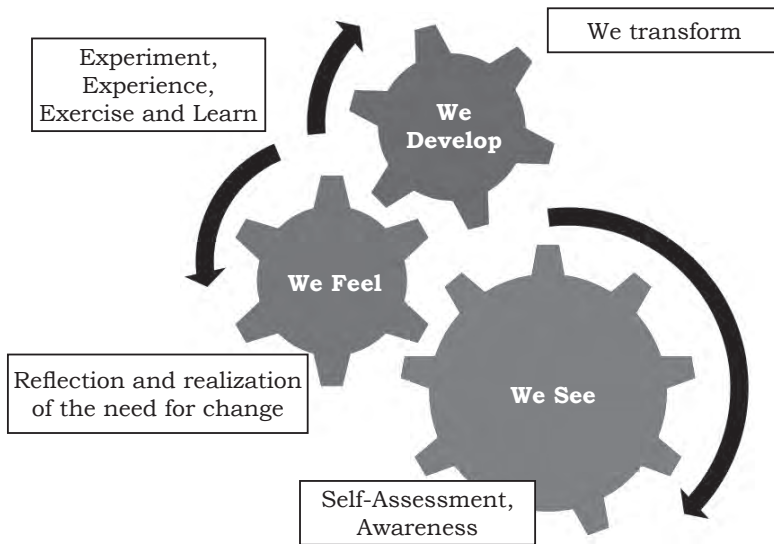


Figure 3. The Theory of Change /Process of Transforming into a Learning Community
 Source: Adapted from Kotter, J. (2006). *Our Iceberg is Melting: Changing and Succeeding under Any Conditions*

- **Achievement levels get significantly better**

The schools significantly improved not only in the board results but it also conducted baseline and end-line at all levels and studied the overall school improvement.

Thus, the purpose itself becomes the outcome. As John Kotter in his book *Our Iceberg is Melting* mentions—for change to happen, people should be able to see, feel and only then they transform to develop. In Katrain Cluster too, the frequent meetings around data, teacher and student workshops on target setting, analysing and studying the gaps, reflections and collaborative commitment is something that led to transformed conditions.

LEADING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES: ROLE OF TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS AND OTHER FUNCTIONARIES

It is very difficult to see a PLC develop in a school without the active support of leadership at all levels. Leadership is therefore an important resource in terms of head teacher/principal commitment and shared leadership (Mulford & Silins 2003).

School improvement and change literatures identify different phases of change (Fullan 2001; Mile 1998). Studying the change process that PLCs go through, researchers saw a progression from initiation to implementation to institutionalisation, as a means

of reflecting the growth in schools seeking to become PLCs (Huffman & Hipp 2003).

During initiation, the focus is on espoused values and norms; developing shared values and vision. Moving to implementation, there is a shift to developing a more transparent culture, reflective and non-judgmental feedback and focusing on high expectations. Institutionalisation actually is a result of members taking pride in their practice and committed to the shared vision and mission so as to pursue it consistently.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

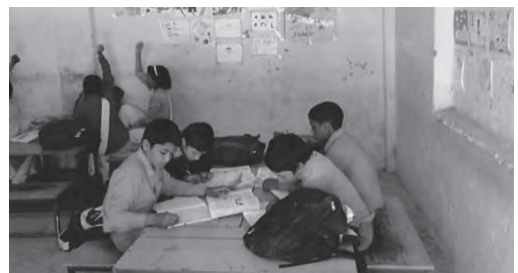
Schools in Katrain Cluster of district Kullu in Himachal Pradesh demonstrated the impact of collaborative learning amongst the community of teachers and heads of schools. It also pointed to the fact that teachers when put in charge of their own development, deliver better commitment and results. This entails policy reform in teacher professional development which includes the following.

- Teachers in charge of their own professional and life-long development
- Exposure and opportunities to learn from other contexts and practices
- Decentralised, outcome-oriented capacity building programmes which have school contexts and needs in focus
- Linking Professional Development Plans of teachers with School Development Plans
- Creating platforms, teacher forums, networks for exchange of ideas within and outside schools through newsletters, wallpapers, school, Cluster, Block and District level magazines.
- Using overall school assessment data for development and professional motivation

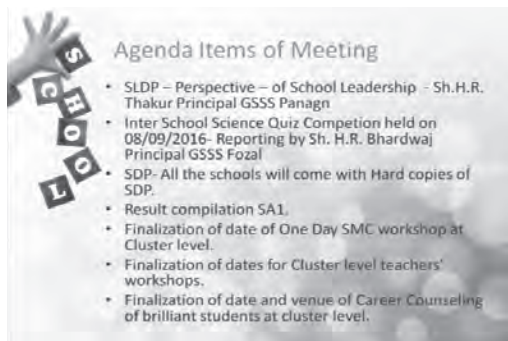
These measures would go a long way in developing and nurturing the school-based human resource and sustain a collaborative and accountable professional community.



Faculty meeting around achievement data at GSSS, Katrain



Peer Group Learning at GSSS, Bagipul



Discussion on agenda in one of the cluster meetings

FIRST LEARNING ROUND OF THE SESSION 30TH APRIL 2015
REFLECTION BY THE OBSERVERS

Sr. No.	Theme	Most	Some	Few
1	To what extent the seating in class room is utilized <small>(Desks have been arranged for Group work)</small>			✓
2	Use of Black Board /TLM		✓	
3	Active Participation of Children in learning			✓
4	Questions Lower order			✓
	Higher order		✓	✓

First Learning Round at GSSS, Katrain, Kullu



Monthly meeting with students at GSSS, Bagipul



Counselling students on target setting

Figure 4

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