

INDIA'S EDUCATION – ONE VIEW ON OPTIMISATION AND OUTREACH

Dr. Swaleha Sindhi

(Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Administration, the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. Decorated educational practitioner Dr. Sindhi is a frequent columnist on related topics, too. She is the Vice President of Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society (IOCES)

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Introduction

In the present era of globalization, organizations are expected to work with a creative rather than a reactive perspective and grow to be flexible, responsive and capable organizations in order to survive. In the existing scenario people are exposed to diverse knowledge through internet, there is much to learn and more to assimilate. Senge's (1990) model of the five disciplines of a learning organization emphasizes on the concept of systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision and team learning. This points on continuous learning for individuals and organizations, with a great stress on the idea of bringing change with innovation and creativity. If the future organizations are driven by individual and collaborative learning, it is advisable to transform schools also into learning organizations, instead of school education being restricted merely to the process of acquiring facts and loads of numerical information to reproduce in examination using rote learning methodologies (current scenario in Indian schools).

In line with the needs of education system in India, schools should become more effective learning organizations that ultimately increase the leadership capacity and support the personal development of every individual at the institution. In chalking out the aims of education in India, Kothari commission report (1964-66) stressed that 'education has to be used as powerful instrument of social economic and political change. The blending of conservative trend and progress is the basic characteristics of a healthy society. In a modern society individuals learn about intricate changes that are occurring around them. School of course is an important agency to usher in the changes'. However, years after these recommendations, the Indian schools are still perceived as institutions; transferring knowledge, fulfilling educational tasks and realizing educational objectives. They reflect upon syllabus, and follow a set of

educational objectives framed to show them direction of activity at particular stages of education. There is hardly any effort to bring change in the system of education. Our education system is not governed with new educational tasks and essential new ideas for the educational organizations. Instead schools in their effort to become learning organizations are already feeling the tidal wave of change in many ways and this has resulted in confused, exhausted and disappointed school leaders who are unable develop the capacity of the school and every individual therein to manage change.

Indian Schools and Challenges

As educator Roland Barth has said, "Relationships among educators within a school range from vigorously healthy to dangerously competitive. Strengthen those relationships, and you improve professional practice." Indian schools fail to develop themselves into true learning organizations due to; the existing school culture, amount of competition and working in isolation. In our schools there is little or no resistance against isolation and unproductive school competitions. Teachers teach in isolation, rarely does a teacher have the opportunity to go beyond her classroom to visit the pedagogic worlds of her peers, to learn from their classrooms. Improving school and community cooperation is another important area for learning organization. There is hardly any interaction between our schools and community. Little efforts are seen from schools to encourage children to get an access to learning resources in the community, to meet outstanding members of the community or involving parents in actively organizing extracurricular activities. One way of building connect with community is involving community elders in developing curriculum, but hardly our schools take suggestions from community elders on the topics to be included in the curriculum. There are negligible efforts to remove traditional education boundaries. It is becoming clear that schools can be re-created, made vital, and sustainably renewed not by fiat or command, and not by regulation, but by taking a learning orientation. This means involving everyone in the system in expressing their aspirations, building their awareness, and developing their capabilities together. Senge calls this the rudder that can keep the organization on course during times of stress. Not to mention, stress among teachers and leaders is a common scenario in majority of Indian schools today.

The way forward

The learning organization approach is capable of making an organization more competitive and adaptive in response to change in a school context. Thus, existence of teacher practices conducive to environment of strong learning environment supported by transformational leaders will enable schools to achieve continuous improvement and excellence in terms of student and teacher learning. The powerful pathway

to becoming a better practitioner is to observe an expert peer in action, to reflect and improve upon one's own practice as a result. When professionals like doctors, engineers or architects can do it then why not our teachers? Why can't we bring teachers' rich 'knowledge-in-practice' from the confines of their classrooms into the public domain? The reason that we are unable bring this change is because our teachers do not have the opportunity to go beyond classrooms to visit the pedagogic worlds of their peers or learn from their classrooms. Neither do the schools organize regular on the job staff development programs for teachers to promote shared vision. On the positive side, today, majority of school teachers and Principals are finding themselves involved in professional learning activities. School and curriculum reforms have necessitated regular review of practices and attitudes. This is for the reason that schools are finding it difficult to resist the pressures of change and improvement especially in response to the demands of professionalism and accountability. It is high time our schools realize that the goal of learning organizations is not the occasional burst of professional activity each time new demands are made of the school, curriculum or practices. Schools and their staff need to be ahead of the change game. Thus, the philosophy of a learning organization must be that learning is a way of working just as it is a way of living.

Last word

The 'learning organization' management approach is capable of making an organization more competitive and adaptive in response to change. The unit of innovation in Indian schools has usually been the individual teacher, the individual classroom, or a new curriculum to be implemented individually by teachers. But the larger environment in which innovation is supposed to occur is neglected. So few innovations occur and in the meantime either the innovative teacher is siphoned for few more bucks by other schools or a teacher who successfully innovates becomes threatening to those around him or her. Thus our fundamental challenges in education involve cultural changes that will require collective learning. By involving people at multiple levels and thinking together about significant and enduring solutions we can bring a positive change in the system. However, the role of our schools as learning organization can only be furthered when the school leadership is committed to transform schools by getting engaged with the learning process themselves. At the same time our teachers also must make effort to develop themselves and be updated before they show high expectations from students. All these constraints have apparently become a hindrance to the transformation of schools into strong learning organizations.