

Tikka Matematika Workshop

Egmont Hall, Fort St Angelo, Birgu

10th-11th March 2016

Breaking boundaries: liberating a learning profession through the growth of Professional Learning Communities

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tikka *matematika*

Overview



- My understanding of learning
- A focus on professional learning communities
- Engaging with the concept of collaboration
- Addressing the leadership conundrum

Opening premise

“...people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.”

Peter Senge, 2006: 3



The intent

To engage personally
and
collectively on central concepts
that determine our role and the way we
engage with it

Instigate
reflection, discussion,
the creation of alternative modes of doing
things;
of relating to others.



My belief

There is no one best model for learning

We need to challenge current formalised models of learning

We need to create our personal and collective models

Learning means “the arrangement and interrelationship of parts”, “networks”.



This definition allows us to see that learning

is not static in nature

conveys meaning to individuals

brings people together

depends on relationships

modifies our behaviour

.....

needs space, time, commitment



Are we prepared to fit in any learning model presented to us?

Are we happy with the existing models?

How effective are they?

How have we engaged with 'learning' throughout our lives?

Have these influenced the way we structure our own courses?

Can we create models that become more meaningful to us and the educators we relate to?

.....

Does our personality count?

Does our background count?

.....

The challenge

Individual Reflection... Collective Renewal

“What are we doing to break existing boundaries, to engage with new forms of learning and liberate a learning profession?”



The reality we are facing ... creating

Reflect on what happens in an Open Climate (in a school):

- Teachers collaborate and work together
- The principal is an educational leader
- The principal provides the right organisational set-up which gives direction, provides support and consideration
- Teachers are committed to clearly set-out goals and tasks
- There is limited emphasis on paper work
- There is an emphasis on creativity and innovation
- Concern is directed at meeting social needs as well as academic ones
- There exists a high level of motivation.
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... *Our reality*

What contexts are we working in?

What contexts are we creating for our learning
and that of others?

What are the engagements between institutions
and with the directorates/ agencies?

The PLC dimensions

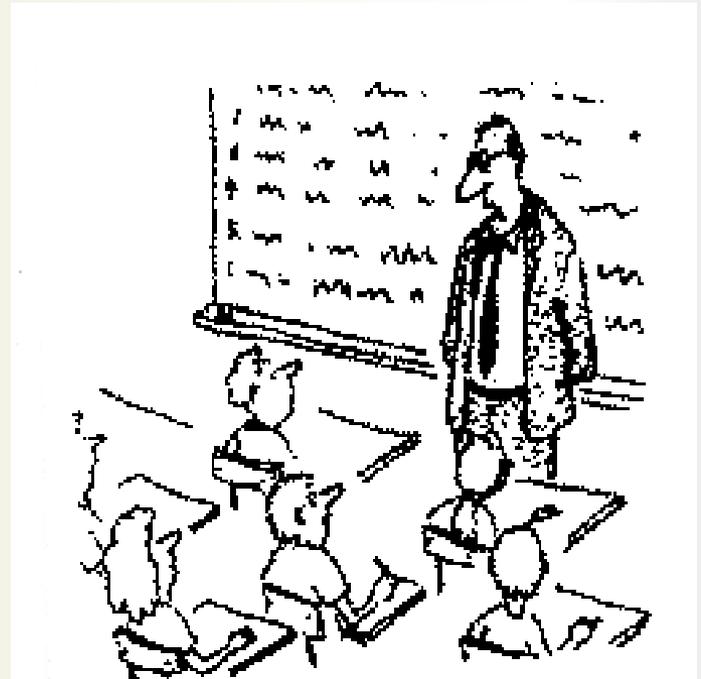
Shared values and vision

Shared personal practice

Collective learning and application
(Action orientation and experimentation)

Shared and supportive leadership

Supportive conditions



"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"

Some issues to address ...

Professional Learning



“Simply putting well-meaning individuals together and expecting them to collaborate is not enough”

Professional Learning

“Directorates/Colleges must teach school leaders, teachers, supporting staff, education officials ... how to work together effectively in PLCs”



Differentiated support

“Directorates must support schools according to their unique needs in order to help them move to the next step in their PLC growth”

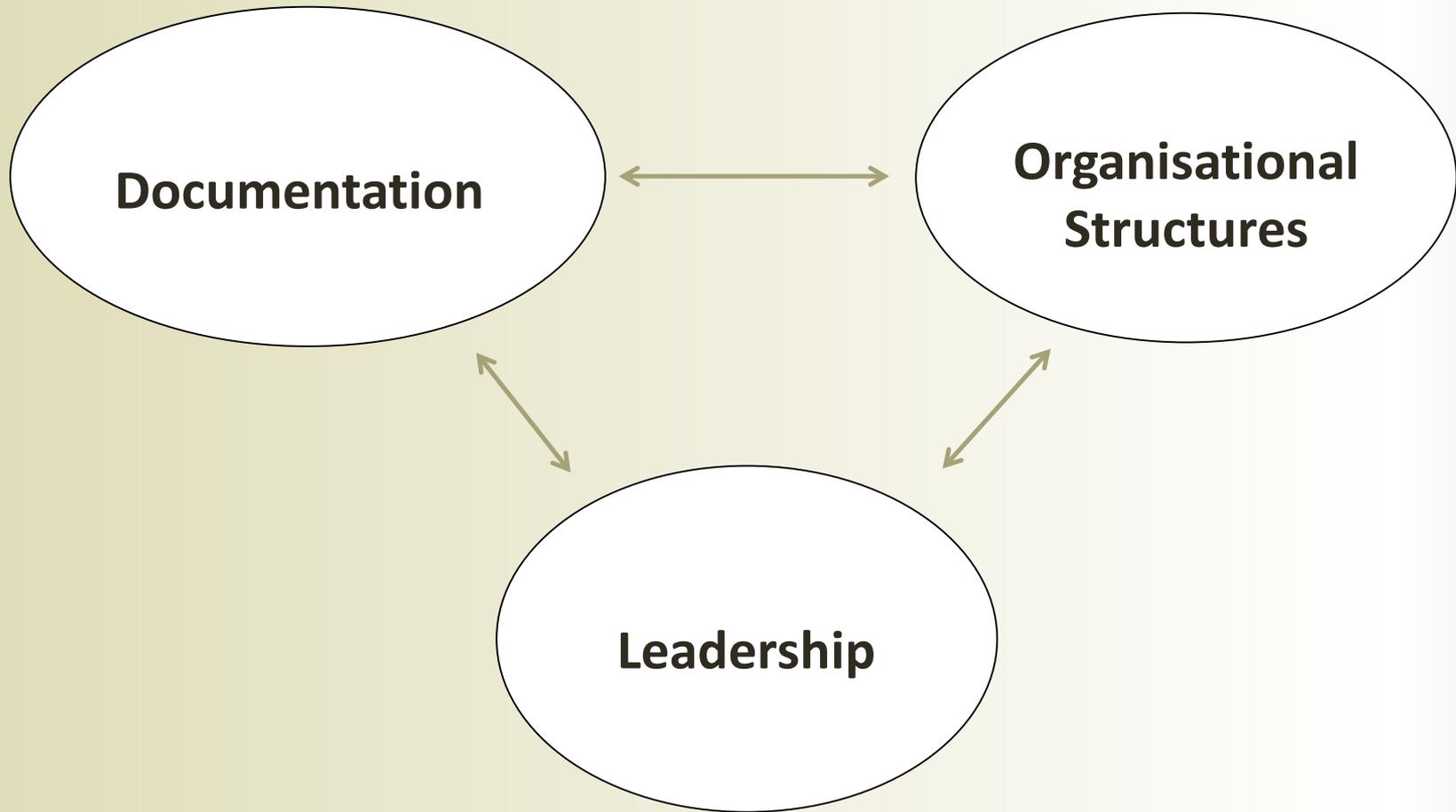
Dedicated time

“PLCs require dedicated time on a weekly basis to discuss and share best practice strategies with colleagues in order to meet the individual needs of students”

In this way learning becomes a “habitual activity where the groups learn how to learn together continuously”

(Hord, 2009:40)

Three areas to focus on



A focus on
Collaboration:
a note of caution

Documentation

What do we see happening:
Documents that continue to
exhort school leaders and
teachers to use more
authentic collaborative
practices. But notice that
they are being told that
collaboration is how they
should act.

**How does this impact on our educators?
Do our natural reactions support or
sabotage attempts at collaboration?**

Organisational structures

What do we see happening:
Structures and models of practice that dictate the forms of potential 'learning' that can take place; when and by whom ...

*A focus on
Collaboration:
a note of caution*

Do the existing OS reinforce particular behaviour? Is teaching & learning practised within clearly demarcated and hierarchical systems? Are we introducing leadership structures that add depth? ...

*A focus on
Collaboration:
a note of caution*

Leadership

What do we see happening:
If leaders are to foster collaboration, they must first change their own attitudes towards leadership.
People will collaborate if we demonstrate and model the necessary attributes at all levels.

How does this perspective impact on us as educators? Are there people who are expected to be enlightened and transform themselves? Or do we see a future based on the belief that all need self-realization and self-transformation before organizational transformation occurs?

Change agency

Origins and Pawns

An Origin is a person who feels that he or she is director of his or her life. Origins feel that what they are doing is the result of their own free choice; they are doing it because they want to do it, and the consequences of their activity will be valuable to them. They think carefully about what they want in this world and choose the most important goals, ruling out those that are too easy or too risky ... aware of their abilities and limitations. In short, an Origin is master of his own fate.

A Pawn is a person who feels that someone or something is in control of his or her fate. Pawns feel that what they are doing has been imposed on them by others. They are doing it because they are forced to, and the consequences of the activity will not be a source of pride. Since external factors are felt to be in control, Pawns do not consider carefully the possible goals in life nor concern themselves with what they can do to further their cause. Rather they hope for lady luck to smile on them.

From Richard De Charms, *Personal Causation*, 1968

Change agency

Research studies on motivation at work suggests that highly motivating conditions are present when teachers:

- Find their work lives to be *meaningful*, purposeful, sensible, and significant, and when they view the work itself as being worthwhile and important
- Have reasonable *control over their work activities* and affairs and are able to exert reasonable influence over work events and circumstances
- Experience *personal responsibility* for the work and are personally accountable for outcomes.

Meaningfulness, control and personal responsibility are attributes of teachers functioning as 'Origins' rather than as 'Pawns.' An 'Origin' has a strong feeling of personal causation, a feeling that the locus for causation of effects in his/her environment lies within him/herself.

Where does this leave us?



Where do we go from here?

What will we take from the
next two days?

Can we engage in new ways of
thinking, reflecting and doing
to create the meaningful
environments that Peter
Senge spoke about?

Are we prepared to open
ourselves to new
opportunities or let this
experience go by?

The decision is ours

Thank you