

PREPARING THE TEACHERS FOR NEW LEARNING ECOLOGY

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In the present global scenario, The mission of any educational institution should be to advance education through innovation in teaching, learning, and leadership, bringing together students, teachers, researchers, policy-makers, educational professionals, and other community members for fostering collaboration to improve education.

As we progress into the 21st century, our work should focus on preparing students for success in work life, and citizenry in the global, knowledge-based, technology-rich, culturally-diverse, rapidly-changing world in which they will live. This task requires helping schools become future-oriented organizations that build upon their traditional strengths while updating curriculum content, teaching practices, management approaches, and technology tools to best serve the students of today and tomorrow.

As the nation's economy continues its irrevocable shift from manufacturing toward idea-driven, creative industries, our schools—and the teaching and learning enterprise at the heart of our schools—need to undergo a transformation as well. The result of such a transformation needs to be a type of educational experience and expertise that will not only support but also ignite participation in—and leadership for—an idea-driven, creative economy. Equally important as supporting a new economy is educational experience and expertise that supports a global citizenry. Our efforts should begin with three foundational assumptions. We must believe that , 1) the teacher is one of the most important factor in determining student success; that 2) professional development needs to be an integral, ongoing part of teachers' lives; and that 3) our educational system must be transformed to support and ignite both an idea-driven economy and a global citizenry. Given this foundation, we must see professional development as key to producing teacher leaders who will not only continue to impact student achievement, but also help to transform classrooms and schools for the 21st century.

Considerable research has focused on professional development models, which, in turn, has led to agreement on a number of key principles of successful practices for school teachers (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos, 2009).

These principles provide a broad design for how to conduct professional development for teachers. However, they do not address directly the new learning context, that is, the new classroom environment in which most of the students and teachers will have access to the new information communication technology (ICT) for effective teaching learning practices.

It is therefore essential to :

1. To articulate the unique conditions—that is, a new learning ecology—prompted by new learning environments,
2. To propose key strategies that leverage the new learning ecology within new learning contexts., that can then be included in professional development systems for teachers of 21st century.

The new learning contexts are prompting a new learning ecology determined by four unique conditions:

▪ **Immediate and constant access to information and a global community:**

Teachers and students alike stand to benefit from such 21st century standards and skills as innovation, creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration promoted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. The ICT facilitates the development of these skills.

It is therefore, teachers and students should have the distinct advantage of immediate and constant access to information and a global community—including communication, productivity and creativity tools.

▪ **Intensity, relevance and personalization of learning:**

These new variables come into play as education shifts to a more learner-centric dynamic—with potentially higher levels of student performance and achievement.

▪ **Highly developed teacher capacities:**

Within the new learning ecology, teachers must have highly-developed capacities for facilitation, improvisation, coaching, and consultation. Teachers must make a pedagogical shift to accommodate learning that is continuous, changing, and—above all—exponential. .

▪ **Highly developed student dispositions:**

Increasingly, learners are described in terms of their dispositions and worldviews, rather than as people who are experts in a particular content area. Additionally, personalized learning takes place outside the classroom in a variety of settings and dynamic modes (Bull, Thompson, Searson, Garofalo, Park, Young, and Lee, 2008). The recognition of learning as a social practice that evolves around peoples' interests suggests the need to be intentional about how we situate students in a learning environment.

As a result of these conditions, the relevant strategies for teacher professional development should be parallelly designed . These strategies can be :

- **Developing Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) among the teachers;**
- **Engaging the teachers in Project-based inquiry ;**
- **Developing among the teachers A global skill set ;**
- **Engaging Teachers in Performance-based assessment of the learners.**
- **Engaging Teachers in professional learning communities and networks.**

These strategies take into account the new learning ecology determined by new learning technologies led learning environment. Equally important, they can help create a new learning ecology for teachers' professional development—one that supports teaching and learning for our increasingly interdependent global age.

Technological tools and information are not always educationally productive. Teacher Educators must provide leadership in creating new models for the teacher to act as facilitator, coach and mentor within the new learning ecology always with a focus on the larger aims and purposes of education.