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J126: INDIVIDUAL PAPERS: Professional Development: Developing self for the profession

TRACKS: TEACHERS’ WORK AND LIVES

Thursday, December 06, 2012
8:30am - 9:00am

SESSION DETAILS

astern Ave Seminar Room 404

J126: INDIVIDUAL PAPERS: Professional Development: Developing self for the profession
Chair: Alison Warren, Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa
Andrea Gallant (2), Philip Riley (1)
Monash University (1), Deakin University (2)

Background: Oversimplifying complex issues, such as mandating rapid improvement in learning outcomes, promotes reliance on technical solutions. Technical problems assume an expert provides solutions "since the knowledge and capacity to solve the problem already exist" (Helsing, Howell, Kegan, & Lahey, 2008). Traditionally this has been the driver of Professional Development (PD) in schools. However, today’s complex problems require adaptive work, where expertise must be generated, not discovered. This process relies on self-authorship (Helsing, et al., 2008, p. 438). Leaders who understand this are struggling to reinvent schools while they manage the existing structure (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Helsing et al (2008) argue that the “development” in PD is the key. This paper reports on eight leadership responses to participate in adaptive PD offered through an ARC linkage grant. The initial contacts and informal conversations during the implementation phase of the project are framed as technical versus adaptive responses (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

Methods: Eight schools were offered one of two self-authorship PD programs. Dialogical comparison of meetings and informal conversations from four primary and four secondary schools selected to participate in the first year of a 3-year study are presented. Leadership responses ranged between: feeling over researched; having to complete too much PD; extra workload; seconded; interrupting real work; and helpful for targeted teachers; personal challenge; new ways to collaborate and communicate. The authors employed collaborative reflection and interpretive analysis to investigate the responses. The range of responses, are worthy of examination as they indicate what matters to the profession. What matters, as Fullan (1993) highlighted, cannot be mandated.

Discussion: How PD is offered to a school is critical. Adaptive work requiring self-authorship, “... comes with asking tough questions, appreciating the scope of the problem, reconsidering ... current roles, and challenging comfortable norms” (Helsing, et al., 2008, p. 439). Adaptive solutions involve transformational change: values, attitudes, beliefs and ways of being. Self-authorship confronts professional identities and may account for the three schools that did not participate. This challenges us as researchers to find points of contact with school leadership, that encourages self-authoring. We recognize Wells’ (2000, p. 53) argument that the education system's continuity is independent of individual participants, yet it “depends on the expert contributions of current participants”. Self-authorship, involves being part of a learning community to discover what future adults will need to fully participate in the 21st Century.

SPEAKERS

GALLANT Andrea

Take Notes on this Session