

Ancient route new journey in education: Sketching future trajectories

Mr. Raju Shrestha
Technical Officer
Training Section
CEHRD

Abstract

Schooling is about achievement rather than enrollment and mere attendance. More than that, it is about developing human capital, social capital and decision-making capital. This is the broad mandate of today's schooling system. To be critical, achieving this broad mandate of schooling has become pie-in-the-sky. It seems difficult but not impossible. Breakthrough in old thinking is mandatory. The great breakthroughs are breaks with old ways of thinking. This is what this paper focuses on and tries to extract and explore innovative thinking for today's schooling system.

Creating context

Teaching is the process of helping learners to develop the feelings of no longer need of teacher. It is not because they have mastered everything but because they will keep on learning on their pace. Learning is the result of schooling. Here, schooling refers to students' enrollment, attendance and upgrading in higher grades whereas learning refers to achievement (World Development Bank 2014, p. 163). Schooling without learning is terrible waste of precious opportunities, resources and of human capital (World Development Report 2018, p. xi). More than that, it is great injustice. This is technically called learning crisis, quality learning deficit or learning gaps (World Education Forum Report 2015, p. 15). In most of, not all, the cases, students regularly attend their class, but not learning even the basics. This means students are in schools, though not learning the basics (British Council Facilitator Resource 2015).

It is the school administration that has key onus to think seriously and sincerely to hold the quality of learning. School administration perceives this fact lightly and even flippantly. They upgrade students in upper grades without developing literacy skills or foundational skills (National Academy Press 1998, Adams, Foorman and Lundberg 2002, Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton and Johnston 2015). This is bitter but true reality in today's world of teaching and learning. Nepal cannot be exceptional case in this matter. This truly depicts the reality that there is wide gap between schooling and learning or enrollment and achievement. This gap is more serious and detrimental between historically disadvantaged and marginalized children and better-off children. This serious trend in teaching and learning has drawn scholars' due attention. This has been and will be central research area for the scholars. Here, what must be understood is quality learning depends on quality schooling. Quality schooling depends on quality teaching. Quality teaching in turn depends on quality teachers (Martine and Polly 2017).

Schooling, in true sense, refers to not only students' regular attendance and upgrading them in upper grades but also developing foundational skills for their sustainable learning. Sustainable learning ipso facto leads to quality living through sharp human capital. Schooling, therefore, is successful when it helps students;

- ✍ develop sharp cognitive skills,
- ✍ develop higher order thinking skills,
- ✍ lead fuller lives,
- ✍ become better individuals and citizens- visionary and enlightened,
- ✍ acquire skills and competencies that can lead to productivity in the labor market,
- ✍ ignite the intellectual sparks- intellectualism is the strength of the nation,

It is, therefore, our schooling system should explore the human potentialities or capital from early days of learning. For this to happen, it should be directed toward "10s". They include;

- 1) Scratch the potentialities of the learners.
- 2) Sketch the future trajectories to achieve those potentialities.
- 3) Stretch the plan- resource leverage not fit plan- *matching resources and opportunities*.
- 4) Set the conducive atmosphere.
- 5) Start with the right kind of environment such as "Kite model" of implementation.
- 6) Supervise the process i.e., sign posts, check points, red-lines and nuts and bolts.
- 7) Secure the quality achievement.
- 8) Share to the world- dissemination.
- 9) Sustain for the future- creating legacy in learning.
- 10) Spiral the efforts if some changes necessary to modify.

(Source: Gary Hamel 1993)

10s model can function as the magic bullet of quality schooling. This "S" culture of schooling ensures four flagship attributes. They are;

- ✍ Access
- ✍ Equity
- ✍ Quality
- ✍ Governance

These overall demonstrate unique functionality of school administration along with product quality. As a corollary, learning becomes qualitative. There are three major legacy of learning. This is what we need to understand explicitly, if we intent to design and implement successful teaching and learning programs. The term 'legacy' is something we create. It is remnant or vestige or living strength of creative soul. According to Stephen R. Covey (2004) legacy can be achieved by "4L". They are;

- ✍ Living
- ✍ Learning
- ✍ Leading
- ✍ Leaving

The three key learning legacy are **ideas**- surface learning; **thinking**- deep learning; and **constructing**- ambidextrous i.e., handling both types of learning (Bereiter 2002 as cited in Hattie 2009, p. 26). These three concepts can be encapsulated as;

- 1) **Surface learning**- Ideas- **physical world knowledge**- factual Information- learning before doing. Information is power. It can be obtained through reading.
- 2) **Deep learning**- Thinking- **subjective or mental world**- Imagination, Investigation, Interpretation- learning by doing. Knowledge is no longer power. It is fuel. The engine is deep learning and the driver is you.
- 3) **Constructed learning**- constructing- **world of ideas**- Invention, Innovation- learning after doing. Nobody can predict true knowledge. True knowledge can be constructed through extraction, exploitation, exploration and experimentation.

(Popper, 1968)

How we can secure and sustain the legacy of learning is the flagship concern of this article. The subsequent discussion will highlight about quality learning in the rapidly changing context.

Anatomy and Physiology of Schooling

Teaching and learning happens in schools. If we want to see the genesis of teaching and learning, we have to study about anatomy and physiology of schools. There is famous adage "history cannot give us a program for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves and of our common humanity so that we can better face the future" (Robert Penn Warren). It is, therefore, we have to find out foundational belief of teaching and learning. Stephen R. Covey (1991) also says that "If we don't get roots, we don't get fruits." Anatomy is concerned with architectural part. Architectural aspect of teaching and learning began from a place which is surrounded by walls having desks and benches where students sit and read. Physiology is concerned with ideology. Ideological aspect began as there must be teacher to teach and learners to learn. These two concepts have not altered yet (Foster, 2014). We still live in obsolete and archaic type of organization and work in outdated principles (Hamel 2014). School as organization is suffering from;

- ✗ Inertia
- ✗ Incremental
- ✗ Incompetence
- ✗ Insipid
- ✗ Sterile

Today is turbulent and volatile time making future difficult to predict. It is an age of tumult, of upheaval, of fortunes made and unmade at head snapping speed and soul stirring manner. Much like wave on the pond, the ripple of punctuated equilibrium is pervasive and rampant. Therefore, school administrators and concerned stakeholders should play the role of not only as provider and enabler but also pioneer in transforming the conventional philosophy of teaching and learning. It is the time to inject new element into the conventional legacy of teaching and learning to give new dynamism. It is not only the hardware- **buildings and resources such as curriculum, text book, tests, etc.** Software- **programs in schools such as training**, but also Intel Inside- **core competencies** (Hattie, 2012) should be focused. Hardware and software are the marketing or advertising tools used by politicians, administrators and principals. The core com-

petencies or the attributes of successful school is missing. This is what successful schooling should strictly focus and implement. Hamel (1993) gives three stages to make organization compete in rapidly changing world that can be linked to schooling process. They are;

- ✎ Building core competencies that give products and services unique functionality
- ✎ Diversification of products and services
- ✎ Maintaining products and services integrity discipline

Anholt (2007) also provides a framework of creating brand leap or transformative leap for the organization. The framework looks like this;

- ✎ Have great strategic ideas.
- ✎ Execute them brilliantly.
- ✎ Tell the world about them.
- ✎ Have good image and character.

Anholt further focuses that these steps should go in tandem. The deficiency in one area leads to deterioration in another. They have virtuous and vicious spirals. They should have balanced relationship. Anholt says for this to happen, the following things need to be considered.

- ✎ Communication 5%
- ✎ Coordination 15%
- ✎ Innovation 80%

Innovation has key role in transforming obsolete and archaic organization. Regarding innovating organization what we have to understand is the concept of school and schooling was once invention. Then, if we want to renew and retain the quality according to time, reinvention of school and schooling is necessary. This is the need and call of the day. Policy makers, planners, implementers and other concerned stakeholders should think about this fact.

Standards for successful schooling

In the age of punctuated equilibrium (Birkland 2016, Hamel 2000), revolution not of evolution and transformation not of incremental or gradualism are today's calls. "Transformation begins from change of mindset" (Foster 2014, p. 120). Mindset is the foundation of performance. "Performance is a function of the sum of ability, motivation and opportunity" (Trompenaars and Coebergh 2014, p. 292). This AMO model directly feeds off into organizational commitment, motivation and job satisfaction. Covey (1990), says;

If you want to make slow or incremental improvement, change your attitude or behavior. But if you want to improve in major ways, i.e., dramatic, revolutionary, transformative ways, or make quantum improvements, change your frame of reference... If we focus our attention on techniques, on specific practices, on to-do lists, on present pressures, we might make some small improvements. But if we want to move ahead in a major way, we need to shift our paradigm and see the situation in a totally new way (pp. 173-175).

He further says, the fastest way to change a person's paradigm is to change their name or their role. New situation demands redefining the role. Therefore, if we want to make our schooling

process qualitative and successful, we have to see the same thing from different standpoint. In the age of "7Is"- i.e., internet, information, innovation, interaction, interdependence, integration and inclusive, quality is not the matter of always doing thing better. It is the matter of doing thing differently (Covey 1990). This means yesterday's problem today's solution or old problem new solution. The contents are same but need to present in new ways. This is called innovation in teaching and learning. There are some philosophy, principles and practices that can give innovative flavor in teaching and learning. They include;

1. Visible teaching and learning
2. Foundational skills for sustainable learning
3. Turning to technology

Visible teaching and learning

Teaching and learning happens behind the closed door. This is humorous thought. To some extent, it is right. Teachers enter inside the classroom and start direct teaching. Everything goes and works inside the classroom. This is unflinching or unswerving thought of most of, not all, the teachers. Classroom activity is not visible for the outsiders. This is foundational belief. It is inherently toxic. Traditional and stunted ideas should be made modernized. This means same concept can be made explicit and transparent. This is what innovation claims. The place is same. The content is same. The teacher is same. The students are same. But it is doing the same thing from different perspective. Same teaching and learning activity can be made explicit, visible and transparent. Teaching and learning becomes visible when;

- ✎ goal is transparent,
- ✎ activity is explicit,
- ✎ engagement is participatory and collaborative- doing things together,
- ✎ learners become teacher of their own learning,
- ✎ teachers become learner of their own teaching,
- ✎ assessment tools and techniques are simple, clear, applicable and feasible,
- ✎ each lesson consists of a variety of activities,
- ✎ teachers are updated and upgraded in their professional knowledge,
- ✎ quality learning is the ultimate goal of schooling,
- ✎ teachers base their teaching on research based evidences,

Visible teaching and learning can be summarized as teacher serves as evaluator and activator. Students become content-sensitive, quality-sensitive, tech-savvy and geeks. Knowledge is democratized. School becomes learning organization. Resilient and retention are the most demanded quality of teaching staff.

Foundational skills for sustainable learning

Foundational skills are basic or surface level skills. Skills that begin to develop in the beginning stage of schooling such as alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, letter writing, print knowledge and oral language are known as foundational skills. They create a strong foundation for deep and constructed knowledge or learning. Foundation skills are also known as;

- ✎ literacy skills,
- ✎ emergent skills,
- ✎ precursor skills,
- ✎ predictive skills,

Foundational skills are like building blocks. Much like blood and flesh in human body, foundational skills in language learning have key role. Without them, learning suffers from crisis. One example can be presented here. If there is not blood and flesh in human body, how does it look like? Can human body function well? Same is the case with foundational skills and quality schooling. Today, globally we are facing thorny challenges to gain and retain quality learning in students. Learning crisis, learning gaps or quality learning deficit is the cause of deficiency in foundational skills. Therefore, our pedagogy should focus foundational skills for sustainable learning.

Turning to technology

The world is within our reach. Knowledge is closer at our hand. But, it lasts a shorter time. Information is scattering everywhere. Everyone has easier, cheaper, faster access on information. The nature of work, worker and organization has dramatically changed. Teaching and learning process is not exceptional case. There is direct and tremendous influence in teaching and learning. It has democratized knowledge. Learning has been flexible, dynamic, open, free, versatile and independent. Many professional websites have solely been made for teaching and learning purpose. It is due to this reality of the day, school administrators knowingly or unknowingly and willingly or unwillingly should turn their attention toward technology. Technology updates, upgrades and ultimately modernizes the profession. Innovation in teaching is impossible without embedding technological spirit in teaching and learning activity. However, there should be cautious use of technology. In the name of technology, we can't forget pedagogy. Effective pedagogy is the key mandate. To support pedagogy, technology should be lubricating oil. Technology should grease on the wheels of education i.e., teaching and learning. The school administrators and principals must be alert, attentive and curious about the nexus of pedagogy and technology. In the present day of teaching and learning, both should go in tandem. The deficiency in one area leads to deterioration in another. They have virtuous and vicious spirals. Therefore, the only way to balance these two sides is establishing schools as ambidextrous and philanthropic. This means being proficient to handle both sides.

Conclusion

Schooling process is still guided by conventional philosophy. Conventional philosophy is relevant but not sufficient in today's time. We have to inject new element into the conventional system to give new dynamism. For this to happen, traditional thinking or mindset should be eschewed by new mindset or prophecy mindset. School leaders should keep in mind that we have talked endlessly about the need for change and innovation, but have not taught teachers and other stakeholders how to be internalized those activities. We have denounced traditional mindset, but have not dethroned it. Therefore, the final view is schooling was once invention and if we want to create new legacy of learning, reinvention in the obsolete concept is mandatory.

References

- Adams, M. J., Barbara, R. F., Ignvar, L. & Terri, B. (1998). *Phonemic awareness in young children: A classroom curriculum*; Paul H. Brookes publishing. London.
- Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive Identity: The new brand management for nations, cities and regions*. Palgrave, Macmillan.
- British Council (2015). *Connecting classrooms: An introduction to core skills for teachers*.
- Covey, S. M. R. (2006). *The speed of trust: the one thing that changes everything*. Free press. New York, London.
- Covey, S. R. (1990). *Principle-centred leadership*. Pocket books. New York, London.
- Covey, S. R. (2004). *The 8th habit: from effectiveness to greatness*. Free press. New York, London.
- Deolalikar, A., Halil, D., Tara, B. & Michelle, R. (2014). *Student learning in south asia: challenges, opportunities and policy priorities*. Washinton, DC: World Bank.
- Foster, P. A. (2014). *The open organization: A new era of leadership and organizational development*. Gower.
- Hamel, G. (1993). *The future for strategy: An interview with Gary Hamel*. Great Britain.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning for teachers: maximizing impact on learning*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis group. New York, London.
- Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: maximizing impact on learning*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis group. New York, London.
- Martine, C. & Drew, P. (2017). *Handbook of research on teacher education and professional development*. IGI, global.
- National Institute for Literacy (2009). *Early beginnings: Early literacy knowledge and instruction*.
- National Research Council (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washinton, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Popper, K. R. (1968). *The logic of scientific discovery* (3rd ed.) London.
- UNESCO (2015). *World education forum*. Final report 2015.
- World Development Report (2018). *Learning to realize education's promise*. World Bank Group.