'Off-Site Insights' – A Qualitative Study of Teacher Professional Development Through the Pandemic and Beyond

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Abstract

The *Professional Development Centre (PDC) at Mallya Aditi International School, Bangalore, India,* began teacher training when Covid-19 hit and all interaction moved online. The aim was to create a democratic and organic training process with equal understanding of one's colleagues as well as the goal ahead. PDC also reflected on generic training practices that never inquired about, or acknowledged, teachers' classroom strategies. This paper will present how we accentuated teachers' voices. The projects involved all 120 teachers, including the principal, irrespective of the department or section a teacher belonged to. Three projects continued over two years while we, as trainers, catered to awareness, sensitivity, and successful utilization of technology. The three major endeavours are incorporated in this paper.

–*The Aditi Learner Traits* came from the floor and brought forth the attributes that teachers wanted to cultivate in students.

–*The Aditi Teacher Talks* included a series of sessions sharing ideas throughout school and honing workshop presentation skills.

–*The Reading PoDs*, in groups of three, focused on discussing eclectic articles, individual teacher philosophies and creating teacher portfolios. We stitched these conversations together to weave the Aditi Teacher Philosophy.

Professional development is most effective when the whole diet of innovative implementation has the teacher as the main stakeholder, who has joyfully engaged with the shifting contexts in a dynamic educational model. Such off-site insights led to the *Education Reimagined Project* which lays out a clear vision for the future of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Bottom-Up, Learner Traits, Insights, Hands-On, Reimagined

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Introduction

Mallya Aditi International School **(**MAIS) is a private, non-profit school located in Bangalore, India. It was founded in 1984 and is governed by the Ujjwal Trust. The school has four sections – Elementary (Std 1-5), Middle (Std 6-8), High (Std 9-10) and Pre-University (Std 11-12). The number of students in each section is given below:

Elementary: 264
Middle: 146
High: 119
Pre-University: 188

During an off-site retreat in 1999, a consensus emerged to make the organizational structure more lateral, shifting some of the decision-making from the Principal to Section Coordinators. In June 2020, the terminology was amended, and Section Coordinators were renamed Heads of Sections, indicating that the decision-making powers of the Section leaders had broadened further. The move was a deliberate one and the pandemic helped in the practice of shifting more responsibility from the Principal to the Heads of Sections, faster and easier. This model has segued very effectively into the organisation as we go forward into the new, offline academic year.

In June 2020, the Professional Development Centre (PDC) was initiated with the main aim of developing and fostering innovative teaching practices. The Head of PDC was also inducted into the SMT (Senior Management Team). The SMT now consists of Heads of Sections, Head of Counselling Services, Head of PDC, Head of Advocacy & Outreach, Administrator and Principal.

The PDC is currently a three-member team consisting of the Head of PDC, who has been a senior teacher at international schools for over 30 years. The other two members of PDC include an English teacher with more than 44 years of teaching experience with twenty of those years spent as part of Aditi, while the third member is a research associate with ten years of varied experience as a teacher and as a journalist.

Given school closures due to the pandemic through June 2020 to December 2021, the PDC team had to do professional development entirely online, with a new dimension of embedding technology to make teaching and learning effective. Earlier probes and informal exchanges had indicated that, while many teachers did not believe professional development had helped them prepare for the changing nature of their jobs, others felt that professional development was more of an annoyance and a compulsion – one did not attend by choice. Many schoolteachers acknowledged that teacher training was barely on their minds when traversing through the labyrinth of a harried school day.

To quote from *Professional Development Risks and Opportunities Embodied within Self Study* by *Margaret Macintyre Latta and Gayle A Buck* **-** "Individually and collectively, self-involvement instils and re-instils purposeful participation within teaching and learning, articulating why educators orient pedagogical practices in particular ways. This is what is so desperately missing from the language and practices of professional development 'fixes' that tend to undermine teacher and student participation in the learning process."

In the same text, it is mentioned that repetition is a notion that Risser (1997) traces back to Aristotle, referring to the turn and re-turn to self-understandings, acting on possibilities.[1]

Therefore, it was important to remember that educators need and want by far the same things that students do. Impetus, inspiration, validation and a general sense of exhilaration that infuses an animated and fruitful ambiance into the classroom. Keeping this, as well as the devolved Aditi structure in mind, the PDC decided to opt for ***a bottom-up*** approach to professional development for the following specific reasons:

1. The decentralised school organizational structure.
2. Consensus method of operation of the Senior Management Team.
3. Shift in thinking about teaching and learning due to the pandemic where teachers had to make quick decisions in online classrooms.
4. The PDC also had an innate conviction that teachers were the best repositories of what worked in the classroom.
5. In an argument for teacher-led learning, Dyer (2013) describes a few elements that make this process worthwhile for participants: choice, flexibility, incremental steps, and supportive accountability.[2]
6. It is increasingly recognized that opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are needed to support teaching as lifelong learning, and that if these incorporate a nurturing bottom-up approach, it is more likely to lead to teacher empowerment.[3]

After much brainstorming and soul-searching, the PDC put a three-pronged system in place. All three steps ran concurrently, and it was posited that the main stakeholders – the teachers – would feel motivated enough to implement and then execute the building blocks of each exercise.

Step 1 - June 2020-September 2020

Traits that Aditi Teachers wanted to develop in the Aditi Learner.

The school is affiliated to the Cambridge International Board which has learner traits clearly articulated.[4] The school offers the Delhi Board examination as well. There is also a specially curated internal curriculum till Std 8. The first step of the PDC was to conduct a study of what traits teachers wanted their students to develop in the course of the teaching/learning process.

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[1] See *Margaret Macintyre Latta and Gayle A Buck*: Professional Development Risks and Opportunities Embodied within Self Study.
[2] See *Angela Macias*: Teacher Led Professional Development: A proposal for a Bottom-Up Structure Approach.
[3] See *Mark Wyatt and Elena Oncevska Anger*: Teachers Cognitions Regarding Continuous Professional Development.
[4] Refer, https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/
-Confident in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others
-Innovative and equipped for new and future challenges
-Engaged intellectually and socially, ready to make a difference
-Responsible for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others
-Reflective as learners, developing their ability to learn

The Process

Respondents: All members of the Teaching Faculty (125)

Aim: A common Aditi Learner outline / summation / traits which would help teachers move in a shared direction towards a common goal. It would be what teachers wanted and not what was imposed on them. Aditi teachers needed to own the learner traits.

Methodology: Teachers were asked to name three traits that they wanted developed in their students. No traits were given to them either as examples or options. While this had its advantages of giving choice to teachers, it also made the task of collating the data challenging. To make the process as transparent as possible the choices were collated under broader headings and terminology was explained to show what was included under each such heading.

Traits with similar attributes were put into groups. Eg. The broad heading 'Resilient' included all the following responses that had come from brainstorming group sessions in Elementary School.

- Taking ownership
- Acknowledging failures
- Perseverance
- Reflection
- Honesty
- Self-worth
- Adaptability

In the same way four other categories were selected after codification of the multiple inputs that were received. The teachers felt that there could not be a hierarchy in the list of traits.

Results: The data was further analysed[5] and five comprehensive *Aditi Learner Traits* were identified. These were to be applicable across all sections of the school.

Aditi Teachers would want their students to be:

- Independent Learners
- Collaborative Workers
- Critical Thinkers
- Empathetic
- Resilient

A number of conversations ensued between the PDC and teachers from across the school, on a one-on-one basis or in small groups. The final goal denoted by the Aditi Learner Traits went beyond the academic requirement of examinations. This evolved into much greater clarity for lesson-planning. Teachers were encouraged to interpret the existing syllabi with elements that would foster, as seamlessly as possible, the dissemination of the above-mentioned Aditi Learner Traits. It was quite straightforward to promote this ideal because the teachers themselves were committed to the significance and advancement of these traits.

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[5]Inputs by Dr. Shailaja Sharma, Dr. Vandana Goswami and Dr. Neena David.

Several such 'Best Practices' were shared in small groups by members of all departments. This, then, evolved into a much wider compass that brought the entire faculty into focus and resulted in the next step.

Step 2 - January 2021-October 2021

The Innovative Teaching Practices that already existed in Aditi and could be used to develop these traits.

The Process

Respondents: Across sections and subject departments, 59 teachers shared their teaching practices individually, or as group presentations. Other teachers signed up for the sessions in accordance with their own choices and interests – each session had a maximum of twenty participants. It did matter which discipline was being showcased – the participating group was always an eclectic one.

Aim: Collecting the best practices around teaching and learning and showcasing the combined wisdom of a committed teaching circle.

Methodology: Every teacher, including the principal, was requested to share any two of the most exciting and inventive teaching experiences from their whole career. It did not matter if the experience took place in a school other than Aditi. A time frame of three months was given, at the end of which, the PDC had an invaluable repository of teaching practices and proficiencies. After this, material was duly sorted and systematized, and a series of talks called *Aditi Teacher Talks* was organized by the PDC. Each session was of 90 minutes duration which included around 15 – 30 minutes of Q & A.

Results: The following are the workshops that were conducted under the aegis of Aditi Teacher Talks.

January 13		Please sign up for only ONE session			Timings: 3.15 – 4.45 pm	
Book Club	From Scripting to Production	Creating Engaged Learners	Innovation Workshop	Second Languages	Student-led Collaborative Learning	Turing Test for Teachers
Getting Students To Read	Insect Play & Matilda	Personal/ Social/ Emotional Development	Going from STEM to STEAM	Blended Learning	Students figuring out Collaboration	Competing with Computers
January 27		Please sign up for only ONE session			Timings: 3.15 – 4.45 pm	
Creating Digital Books	Second Languages	The Art of Story-Telling	Master Chefs in the Classroom	Learning Through Games	Activities for Student Engagement	The Lakes Project
Interactive Session	Digital Techniques & Activities	Interactive Session	Skill Building with Food	Experiential Learning	Inside & Outside the Classroom	A Multi-disciplinary Approach
February 3		Please sign up for only ONE session			Timings: 3.15 – 4.45 pm	
My Subject in the News	Detecting Authorial Bias & Fake News Online	Creativity in Physics & Mathematics	The Human Element: The Most Interesting Thing, Ever	Creative Writing	Truly Evil Writing Tasks & Research Projects	Can Students Actively Participate in an Online Class?
Using Newspapers to Teach Law & Sociology	How to Verify Sources & Information Online	Includes a Showcase on the Trip to Kuppam	Stories Behind the Information	Interactive Session	Assignments on Real World Problems for Critical Thinking	Role-playing for Engagement
February 17		Please sign up for only ONE session			Timings: 3.15 – 4.45 pm	
Interrogating Notions: Equality, Liberty & Justice	Using Technology Creatively in Math.	Interactive Psychology	Inter-disciplinary Approach to Learning	Sneak-Peek: A Journey with Sherlock Holmes	Inventions for Flood Management	Would you rather WALK backwards, or RUN for the rest of your life?
Making Sense of Federalism	Use of the White Board	Activities to build Resilience & Empathy	Interactive Session	Interactive Session	Student Creativity through Collaboration	Supporting Joyful Learning & Emotional Engagement
October 21		Please sign up for only ONE session			Timings: 3.15 – 4.45 pm	
What If? Fallacy – What's that?	Chemistry is Everywhere	Parts of a Cell	Teaching Formations of Mountains Creatively	Gender Fluidity: Student Perspectives	Math Stations	PE – The Challenges Faced During E-learning
Building Resilience in English Language Classes	Building Appreciation of the World Around Us	Flowcharts & Applications in Biology	A Diverse Presentation	Students' Discussion & Questions	Differentiated Instruction	Three Presentations

Table 1: The 'Teacher Talks' Project

These talks helped not only to document and articulate, but also recognize and appreciate the sagacity that already existed within the school community. Following the same format, the PDC hopes to showcase more teachers' innovative practices during the next academic year.

Step 3 - June 2021-June 2022

Capturing Personal Experiences

The Process

Respondents: 39 High School & Pre-University teachers

Aim: The premise that the PDC team began with was as follows -

A teacher can inspire learning by being a learner. In fact, a teacher often helps to create new knowledge by continuously examining one's own teaching methods and finding novel ones. PDC wished to create a safe forum that would allow teachers to do all of this, in very small groups, away from any sense of pressure.

The first issue was to discover if individual teachers had the discernment and appreciation of their own teaching philosophies, and whether their values and beliefs, as they related to teaching, were clear and succinctly articulated. What in their view were the factors that made for an excellent class and a class that did not go as planned? This also included their insights of online classes during school closures. Besides, the pandemic had also distanced teachers from their relaxed, small group discussions in informal settings. In-depth ponderings, dialogues, parleys had to be restored, rethought and reconsidered. This led to the development of the Reading PoD.

Methodology: Each Reading PoD was structured in the following way:

Number of Teachers in Reading PoDs: 3 (generally from different disciplines)

Number of Reading PoDs: 13 (High School and Pre-University Section teachers)

Timeframe: Each session was of 40 minutes duration and each group of 3 teachers had a session once a week, for a period of 4 weeks.

Week 1: Session 1: Individual Teaching Philosophy

Aim: To proffer teachers options that gave them ownership over their own Teaching Philosophies while working in small, relaxed, professional learning groups fortified by informal discussions over diverse subjects.

Methodology: Each group was eased into thinking about individual teaching philosophy and the role it played in planning the lesson and dealing with class dynamics. Did one's teaching philosophy change across subjects (in case a teacher taught multiple subjects) or across sections?

After discussion, the three participants were given time to express in writing what their own teaching philosophy might be. These responses were then documented and held in deferral till the fourth and last session.

Results: As the PDC team probed the teaching philosophies at hand, it was clear that these were mostly looking at the larger picture that went beyond the specific class or the subject.

The goal seemed to be to take the students 'beyond the benchmarks' of syllabi and examinations. Several significant issues were gleaned from this session.

Main Teaching Philosophies	How They Were Expressed
A relationship between teacher and students is the most important. This was even more so during online classes.	a) I believe in making learning more productive so that students can relate their learning with day-to-day life. b) Subject-specific knowledge becomes redundant unless students learn how to use what they have gleaned in a constructive, positive way, for the betterment of society.
Recognition that the classroom could be an uncomfortable space, where discussions may not go as planned. A teacher needs to be prepared for the unexpected.	a) The fertile class will have to be a liberal space. This involves enabling students to make sense of society in a classroom that values critical engagement and depth. b) The class must be a safe space where students can express themselves without fear. c) Students' efforts are more important than their results or grades and they must be able to enjoy the learning process.
Learning is a two-way street, and a teacher should be willing to learn from the students.	a) I always want to be a teacher who inspires curiosity. b) The teacher is an important member of the classroom, but not THE most, and true learning for the students takes place when they begin 'doing'.
Making sure that as many students as possible were engaged in the classroom.	a) My teaching philosophy includes understanding the needs and interests of the students and drafting the syllabi/class activities accordingly. b) I want to ensure that students fall in love with the subject. Love for learning must be top priority. Therefore, learning must involve kinesthetic, auditory, visual inputs and above all, fun.
Making teaching accessible to a wide range of student abilities.	a) I wish to use the class environment to tie the student's motivation to the class content.

Table 2: Individual Teaching Philosophies

Week 2: Session 2: Socratic Seminar

Aim: The normal energy of offline discussions was missing at this time. In order to make up for this loss and provide a welcome break from online teaching the Socratic seminar was devised. This gave teachers space and a structured time slot to engage in an intellectual discussion, where many questions could be raised, and also explore ideas that were not immediately related to academics.

Methodology: A short article or an excerpt from a longer piece was mailed to the group and they were asked to come to the session with a question on the reading. All readings were unrelated to education, unless one sought questions or answers in the piece that made for universal links.

Results: The questions were aplenty and given below is a small sample which can exhibit the variety of thoughts, arguments, real-life experiences, connections to teaching, universal

truths, and several other tantalising issues that jostled with each other. The discussions had to be curtailed often because of the time constraint. There were much fewer clear resolutions, but the questions arrived with great earnestness and those explorations were what the PDC team had set out to provoke!

	Week 2, Session 2: The Socratic Seminar	
	The Readings	**Questions Raised on the Readings**
1.	**Margaret Atwood's Commencement Speech**	**Finding fault with the education system – why is this par for the course across generations? Why do educators never get it right?**
2.	**Why Facts don't Change Our Minds – James Clear**	**How factual is a fact?**
3.	**Indo-Anglians – Sajith Pai**	**Let's ask ourselves. Are we Indo-Anglians? Is it aspirational for us or are we a little defensive about this?**
4.	**Justice and Morality – Excerpted from Michael Sandel's book *Justice***	**Is it wrong for sellers of goods and services to take advantage of a natural disaster by charging whatever the market will bear? If so, what, if anything, should the law do about it?**
5.	**Desiree's Baby – Kate Chopin**	**Kate Chopin's use of the colours black and white (as well as darkness and light) impact the reader's understanding of the story. Are these two colours the most ubiquitous threads of human society today?**
6.	**No Time to Think – Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior.**	**Professionally and personally, what are you likely to regret more – your action or inaction?**
7.	**Humour – Excerpted From theschooloflife.com**	**Have you ever used humour effectively to come out of a sticky situation?**
8.	**Why Hard Work Alone isn't Enough – Kate Morgan**	**The writer considers politicking a valuable asset. Do students use this path as well? Is there a teacher responsibility here?**
9.	**Does Knitting have a Gender? – Sue Green, Nicole Snow, James Madison**	**Are these stereotypical attitudes always learnt at home or are they cultivated as a result of living in a society like ours which over-dramatizes 'domestic chores' but only when men turn to it?**
10.	**The Power of Red Lipstick – Asia Milia Ware, Jacqui Palumbo**	**Red lips and Protest – are these two to do with the lips, or the colour, or both?**
11.	**Satire – Cameron Laux**	**Satire complains a lot – is that a dead end in itself?**
12.	**Views on Sport – Martin Kettle, Keith Parry, Eric Anderson**	**Why do class and race prejudices show up in sport?**
13.	**The Downside of Work-Life Balance – James Clear**	**Is there an inevitable gender bias involved when it comes to maintaining the work-life balance?**

Table 3: Socratic Seminar on Eclectic Readings

Week 3 - Session 3:   Reflecting on Remarkable as well as Mediocre Lessons

Week 4 - Session 4:   Both these sessions were dedicated to teachers reflecting upon their own teaching practice

Q. What makes for an excellent lesson and what are the features of a lesson that did not go as planned?

Aim: Many studies have emphasised the role of critical reflection in teacher education. The PDC believed that reflection enhances teachers' knowledge and skills. This can help instructors deeply understand their own teaching styles and further define how they will grow as teachers.

Methodology: A short time was spent in discussing that all teachers face the eventuality of a good class and one that becomes a nightmare. Sundry reasons were discussed, but most of the allotted time was spent by the participants in writing out their responses to the above question. These responses were then mailed to the PDC team.

In session 4, the participants had a choice regarding which class one wished to share with the group. Interestingly, most wished to share both, and if it was only one, then the negative class was generally shared! This was when the PDC team made the connect between a personal teaching philosophy (from Session 1) and one's perception of which class went right and which disappointed. While one does not reiterate a teaching philosophy to oneself regularly, in a subliminal state, it is always there and manifests itself in significant ways. It was clear that a teacher's teaching philosophy invariably shaped the perception of a class – whether it went remarkably well or not.

Results: All participants were amazingly candid about their successes and also what they considered as disappointments. The PDC team gleaned much from each teacher's individual journey and was able to put together some ideas, sharing both the kudos and the self-criticism in equal measure.

a.   An Excellent Lesson happens when:

- students engage above and beyond the expectations of the teacher
- in the online class changing the onscreen background brings in a sense of novelty and excitement
- the class trusts the teacher and the process, and indulges in discussion and reflection
- the teacher makes the class relevant to students
- a student, who is a negative influencer, is rehabilitated into the class dynamics
- trust is built, and the teacher recognises it through student responses
- a hands-on activity is successful
- space is given to students allowing them to make certain decisions in class
- the teacher uses a setback and turns it around
- spontaneity can emerge even in a planned lesson or structured environment

b.   A Mediocre Lesson happens when:

- a teacher overestimates the rapport built with students that might actually not be there
- a teacher is unable to gauge the class dynamics
- there is a mismatch between a teacher's love of the subject and the students' indifference to it
- a teacher overlooks the problem that a particular student might be facing
- the teacher is not conversant with the new terminologies used by current-day students, and it leads to a disconnect in understanding
- in an online class, there are too many elements to deal with, which remain only visual and not kinaesthetic
- irrespective of how many times a teacher has taught the topic earlier, meticulous planning has not happened
- a teacher jumps to conclusions without knowing the background clearly
- the teacher does all the talking and the student has no time to think
- the spontaneity of a moment is curbed because the planned lesson must go through

Step 4 – June 2021 – July 2021

Technology Platforms

The Process:

Respondents: Section Heads

Aim: Collecting information on technology platforms operating across school.

Methodology: Meetings were held with relevant section heads discussing the efficacy of the technology used and what should be taken forward to offline classes.

Results: The following technology platforms satisfactorily facilitated the delivery of online classes in the respective sections:

Elementary – Showbie, Zoom

Middle – i-tunesU, Showbie, Zoom

High – Google Classroom, Google Meet

Pre-University – Google Classroom, Google Meet

Step 5 - February 2022 - March 2022

Education Re-imagined

The Process:

The final step included using all the information gained over a two-year period to re-imagine Teaching and Learning.

Aim: The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a much greater appreciation for the importance of schools. The role of teachers, their skills and their invaluable responsibility in student well-being, came to the forefront. Teaching had come under the kind of scrutiny that made it imperative to look beyond and discern what might be possible for education on the other side of Covid-19. Technology and Innovation had suddenly moved from the margins to the centre of our education systems. The PDC took this as an opportunity to identify new strategies, that if sustained, could help young people get an education that prepared them for our fluctuating times. The student body that would be accountable for completely independent learning would also participate in the decision making process.

Methodology: The PDC posted on its Google Classroom a need for a teacher team to take this project forward. 11 teachers applied, and a group of 5 teachers* were selected across Sections.

*The Team: Nandita Mohan, Shukti Dutt, Ritika Paul, Priya Rao, Rajeshwari G.

Timeframe: The team met once a week, every week for a period of two months – February and March 2022. Discussions kept the Aditi Learner Traits firmly in focus.

The Respondents	Questions Asked	Responses
Student Council Representatives: a) **Middle School** b) **High School** c) **Pre-university** d) **Elementary School - Std 2 students**	a) **What did you think were the benefits of Online teaching?** b) **Would you wish for some aspects of online teaching to continue when Offline School starts?** c) **What are the benefits of Offline School?**	a) **The LMS (Learning Management Systems) had advantages for organization of study material.** b) **All Student Council members of Middle School wanted Offline School on all days of the week.** c) **Student Council members of High and Pre-University Sections felt a hybrid system would be beneficial. Pre-University Section Student Council members felt that one day a week online classes could continue. It would lead to less time spent commuting.** d) **The benefits of Offline School were the physical interactions between all school stakeholders including developing deep and meaningful relationships.**

Table 4: Inputs from Student Council Representatives

Results: Tying all the threads together the Education Reimagined team recommended a three pronged process – a 'must do', a 'should do', and a 'could do'.

"MUST DO"	
1.	**The LMS would continue to be used, even after school reopened. Google Forms to be used to elicit responses and collect data for a variety of purposes.**
2.	**All students except those belonging to Elementary School must be encouraged to use technology during the school day, in greater or lesser measure, in as many subjects as possible.**
3.	**One parent-teacher conference a year would continue to be online. This would facilitate a parent/s who could be travelling.**

Table 5: The Must Do

As social distancing restrictions relaxed in 2022, the faculty had to consider what activities might be used to engage our students in more active and collaborative forms of learning.

"SHOULD DO"	
1.	**Create, share and comment on images, PowerPoint presentations, videos, audio files, and so on. This is typically based on solving a specific problem or providing reflections on the topic at hand.**
2.	**Co-facilitate meaningful discussions, thereby de-constructing and co-constructing knowledge.**
3.	**Find applications and programmes that allow students to implement animation or movies to illustrate their own writing or conceptual understanding for topics.**
4.	**Teach digital etiquette – this should continue through the year. Current students are digital natives who must be allowed opportunities to practise these skills in a safe environment , while engaging their minds.**

Table 6: The Should Do

Finally, the Education Re-Imagined team reiterated that the Aditi vision is committed to graduating students who are digitally literate, critical thinkers, problem-solvers and excellent written and verbal communicators. But these outcomes cannot be achieved through programmes that are solely based on 'must' or 'should', because it's not just about "knowing stuff", it's about "doing stuff". **'Could'** is about "doing stuff"!

"COULD DO"
1. **At what point does a translation/ interpretation/ elucidation/ analysis/ version become an 'imitation' or, has it become a poem/ theory/ concept/ philosophy/ hypothesis in its own right? Beginning with the root, 'could' one see the different tangents in which the root has travelled? Has it been a movement forward or backward?**
2. **Putting together two supposedly disparate subjects during the course of a single unit – physics and music / fiction and science / history and economics / history and geography / languages and mathematics – the more unusual the combination the better! 'Could' the two be melded in a manner that defies severance, an innovation quite distinct from where we started and one that eventually exists as a novel thought in its own right?**

Table 7: The Could Do

Step 6 – Academic Year 2022-2023

Myline Project

The Education Re-Imagined team finally put together the MyLine Project to be implemented across school in the course of the next academic year.

Aims: The MyLine Project hopes to develop two important traits from amongst the five identified by Aditi teachers in the course of Step 1 of this study. While all the Learner Traits will generally be in focus, the two traits chosen to be highlighted and improved during the course of the MyLine Project are Independent Learning and Collaboration.

Methodology: Every teacher in the school will select one topic/unit where all material will be uploaded on Google Classroom and students can independently negotiate the learning materials with the entire emphasis being on self-learning. The teacher needs to:

a. Inform students about the topic taught in the MyLine Project.
b. Clarify that the teacher will continue to teach other topics and proceed with covering the curriculum throughout the MyLine Project. The MyLine Project takes place in parallel.
c. Upload all learning materials, links and other study material on Google Classroom.
d. Make the timeline clear.
e. Embed quizzes/questions in the online material to test understanding.
f. Encourage students to collaboratively problem solve in their own time.
g. Have a mid-point check in class for students to ask questions.
h. Assess the students at the end of the topic/unit.
i. A member of faculty will be the single-point-of-contact (SPOC), who will liaise with the heads of departments to oversee the journey of the MyLine Project and also keep the PDC apprised of the same.

Subject areas, chosen specifically from the syllabus, will be given to students for self-study, but with the requisite scaffolding in place. This implies that all course material must be prepared and disseminated according to a timetable so that students may successfully comprehend an area of study without direct teacher intervention. Students could turn to their peers for help and thus the goals of both independent learning and collaboration could be met. Secondly, the project will encourage teachers to use technology creatively. From amongst the faculty a group of technology-mentors will assist teachers, should they encounter any difficulties.

Conclusion

In October 2021, the PDC asked the Heads of Departments of High School and Pre-university Sections to ask teachers in their departments the following question:
Can independent learners be created in an online platform?

95% of the respondents replied 'Yes' while 5% of the respondents replied 'Sometimes'.

Given this response and the fact that classes have become offline, the PDC is very hopeful of the success of the MyLine Project in the coming year.
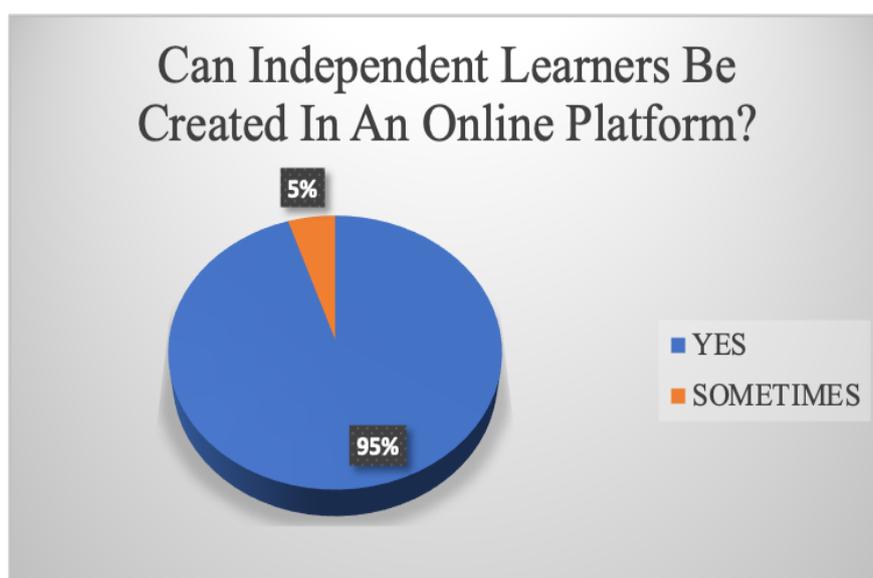

Figure 1: MyLine Project

Despite the difficulties of enlarged teacher accountability due to a ***bottom-up*** teacher professional development approach, there were opportunities which teachers at Aditi took as they negotiated self-learning, especially of various technology applications, to make teaching more effective.

The downsides of ***bottom-up*** professional development are the risks associated with snowballing teacher obligations. Face-to-face interaction being scarce, teachers felt the need to consult the Heads of Sections or Heads of Departments more often. However, given the unique nature of the pandemic teaching years, educators also appreciated the fact that they were provided adequate support from the school administration to conduct their classes successfully.

Baptized by 'Covid fire' most of the teachers at Aditi successfully negotiated the 3 Steps coordinated by the PDC and some even managed a few more steps on their own!

The PDC team has been able to conclude that professional development could be more effective if it is differentiated by gauging teachers' readiness, involving them in the process, utilizing their own interests and providing continual reflection opportunities.

During one of the first planning sessions of the PDC a formula was coined which lit the way at every step that was taken during the last two years – 2020-2022. The PDC team witnessed innovation and risk-taking, the breaking of moulds and improvisation, serious application and passion, in almost equal measure.

The formula was "Organized Magic & Madness".

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