



THREE YEARS AND STILL COUNTING

It is the first Sunday of the month, and that means there is an online meeting of the *Learning Community of Reflective Practitioners (LCoRPs)* at 3:30 pm.

I set my alarm lest I forget. But I seldom need the alarm: eager as I usually am to attend what has gradually turned into a monthly meeting. [We met on two Tuesdays a month when we first started, three years ago.]

Today, a member who had taken a rather long hiatus before she re-joined us recently is going to speak. Her Action Research two years ago (when she was still a member of the group) was on an interesting (and all-too-familiar) problem: to redirect the focus of her Kindergarten and Pre-Primary teachers towards the *process of teaching* rather than just the *outcome*. [This very relevant research resulted in a paper that forms part of the compilation in the recently released book [A LEARNING COMMUNITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS From Whispers To Resonance](#).] In the time that lapsed since she left the group and then re-joined, N's role changed from that of a **Headmistress** of the Pre-Primary section of a school to that of **Principal** of one of the same group of schools.

I log in five minutes early, like I always do. And like it often happens, I enter a meeting room with three others already logged in and happily chatting. Within the next few minutes, others videos pop up. [One member had informed us of her inability to attend today's session.] Soon, all have joined: except two who had informed us of the likelihood of their joining late. We start the meeting exactly on time. N shares her screen and takes us through a new action research project that she has started. And what is this new problem? Somewhat connected to her earlier one, it now aims to effect the following change in the school that she now heads:

To cultivate a supportive environment for middle school teachers through collaboration and communication.

"Action Research (AR) has changed me, personally as well as professionally," she declares in her soft voice. "The earlier AR paved the way for my current AR."

Interestingly, when she started this AR, her promotion had not yet been made public. So she had begun engaging with the teachers *as an action researcher*, not as their future Head. This, she admits, was both beneficial as well as challenging! For one, they didn't feel obliged to answer her questions or make themselves available for her interviews. "I was nobody! So they naturally found it difficult - as well as unnecessary - to take time out to answer my numerous queries!" she laughs as she explains away the delay in her understanding the current mind-sets of the teachers. In the meanwhile, the late attendees have quietly merged into the meeting.

As we watch her share the Google document that she invited the teachers to fill, we are struck by the depth and range of questions like these:

1. How often have you felt comfortable expressing yourself freely with your colleagues/management?
2. What do you see as beneficial/unwelcome in collaboration amongst teachers?
3. If a new teacher joins your department, how often do you reach out to help them with their work?
4. How often do you combine classes with other teachers for shared activities?

"What fabulous questions!" we exclaim in admiration. N confesses that she consulted another former member of the group, A, in crafting them. [A had opted out of the group as she moved away from school teaching. But she continues to engage with members of LCoRPs personally, and particularly with N, even professionally.]

We listen spellbound as N shares her road ahead, and excitedly offer ideas and suggestions for her to draw out the less interested teacher. One member - who is driving as the meeting is on, and is therefore off her camera - types a question in the chat window: "Marvellous work, N! **How can we as a group support you in your AR?**"

Animated energy ripples through the group, as ideas are shared. We forget the limited cyberspace that we are in. Indeed, we are closer than physical space can allow. One member speaks of her angst at school. Another nods vigorously in empathetic agreement as she follows the former's story with hers. "What would you do in such a situation?" each one asks the other.

The allotted hour is over. But we chat on and on. And when it is a full hour and a half since the meeting began, we reluctantly pull ourselves away from our computer screens as our domestic arenas are calling.

But as each one returns to the kitchen/living room/grocery store, we feel -

Energised. Supported. Heard.

For this is what *going from whispers to resonance* is all about.

Mandatory membership has little to do with it.

