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Continuing education for teachers in the twenty-first century.

Lifelong learning based on school-to-school collaboration

by Ana Moreno Salvo

INTERVIEW WITH MERCÈ GISBERT CERVERA

There has been talk of the importance of lifelong learning in the twenty-first century for a long time now. From this perspective, how do you see today's teachers?

Yes, if we review the publications from the last three decades we find references to the topic of lifelong learning. The concept of continuous learning is applicable to everyone. The term "lifelong learning" also implies the teaching staff.

Practising teachers have a wide range of training opportunities so they can constant upgrade their skills, and while doing so they can develop in all types of subjects, methodologies and teaching strategies. Most of this training is free and voluntary. However, not all teachers have the

same perception of the need for continuous learning. Some teachers still decide that they do not need training, although there are fewer and fewer of them.

What do you think are the keys to sustainable teacher training to

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ensure the effectiveness of schools today?

As always, for a plan to be effective and have an impact on improving the educational system, it should be able to develop a training plan with a middle-term vision that is designed around the strategic aims of education and geared towards improving the educational process.

Public policy strategies are often short-term in nature. There are training strategies that start and last one or two academic years. This short duration prevents them from having an impact on the school system in terms of improvement and quality assurance.

In education, there is a deeply rooted idea that each teacher

has his or her own style and should teach as he or she sees fit. Sometimes this makes it difficult for teachers to work as a team. What is your opinion of this trend and its effect on students' academic performance?

I believe that tackling the issue of academic performance from the perspective of teachers' "academic freedom" is oversimplifying the situation today and failing to have a holistic view of education or student learning outcomes.

The issue of academic performance, which is directly related to students' development process in terms of learning, should be analysed from a 360-degree perspective and bear in mind that students learn as much or more outside the school as inside. For this reason, teaching is increasingly complex because it actually has to consider not only strictly school-related academic development but also all the inputs received in society and the family (especially the latter).

Returning to your question, I believe that more and more schools are working in teams, because the methodological changes that have been incorporated in recent years and the use of digital technologies

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Teaching is increasingly complex. It has consider not only academic but also social and emotional inputs

have led teaching teams to have to design and carry out projects together. Determining to what extent these new directions have affected students' academic performance without evidence is very difficult, and I would not venture to say that there is a direct relationship between the two.

Sometimes we get the feeling that teachers do a lot of training, but it rarely has the effect of changing educational paradigms or the way they teach and learn in their classrooms. Why do you think this happens?

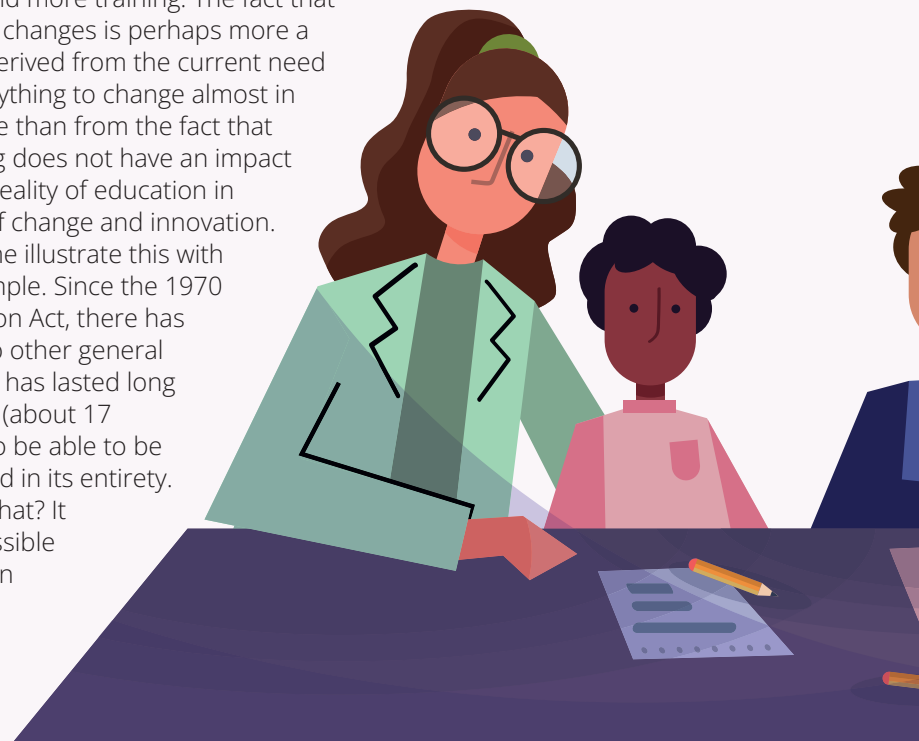
Yes, I agree that teachers are getting more and more training. The fact that nothing changes is perhaps more a vision derived from the current need for everything to change almost in real time than from the fact that teaching does not have an impact on the reality of education in terms of change and innovation.

Let me illustrate this with an example. Since the 1970 Education Act, there has been no other general law that has lasted long enough (about 17 years) to be able to be deployed in its entirety. Why is that? It is impossible to design

effective continuing teacher training if when one change has begun to be implemented another one comes along. The effect this generates is disorientation. In addition, no evidence of the reality of education is collected to see what has changed, if anything, and it is never borne in mind that education is a kind of long-distance race, so we will never know how it has developed if we don't have the capacity to "shield" public policies in education from changes in legislatures and partisan ideologies.

What is meant by effective pedagogical leadership at a school? Why is it necessary? How can it be achieved?

When we talk about leadership, we mean the ability to design and develop projects of any kind and to integrate all the related stakeholders in order to achieve and implement them successfully.



If we apply this to a school, we can say that effective pedagogical leadership is exercised by the administrative team when it is able to design an educational project for the school that is innovative and sustainable and involves the entire educational community with a 360-degree perspective.

Good pedagogical leadership is necessary to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational process in terms of learning outcomes, school climate, innovation and integration of all responsible stakeholders.

How do you think teaching teams should work and interact with each other? Today there is a lot of talk about networking and sharing experiences, and about Edu Labs. To what extent can this practice improve teaching?

All collaborative practices in themselves are a huge contribution. Education is largely

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a communicative and social act. For this reason alone, teamwork is more geared to what education should be than individual work. In fact, the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s and the recent health

emergency caused by COVID-19 are clear examples. Communities, both analogue and digital, have enabled us to guarantee the development of education despite the difficulties. In both cases, networking has been a clear example of the added value of working as a group rather than individually.

Likewise, the experiences of Edu Labs, Maker spaces and all the programmes that are currently being promoted by the Department of Education, are a clear example of how the whole is more than just the sum of its parts and extends the impact of changes and innovations.

