

Building Collegial Cadences Through Collective Effervescence: A New Foundation For Professional Learning

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Abstract : Collective effervescence, a sociological concept coined by Emile Durkheim, has gained traction in recent literature, particularly when evaluating post-pandemic social interactions. Referring to the affective arousal experienced by members of a group engaged in a shared purpose, it describes the feelings of energy, synchrony, and the somatic responses made possible when an individual moves literally or metaphorically alongside others in a mutually satisfying endeavor. In the field of Education, professional learning meetings serve as an example of instances where groups of educators join in cadence, moving toward a common intellectual goal. However, educators often experience reservation toward professional development, citing it may lack effectiveness. Rather than supporting emotional closeness and building rapport, school-based professional learning may become a dreaded or obligatory experience. This study seeks to equip educational leaders with the tools necessary to shift professional learning efficacy by utilizing principles of collective effervescence as a framework. Through this study, a grounded theory approach spanning a nine-month period was engaged with a secondary school teaching staff of approximately 130 teachers. Experiences with and attitudes toward professional learning were gauged through observation, surveys, interviews, and a review of school communications. The data revealed five hallmarks of collective effervescence, which introduce potential parallel equivalents related to professional learning. Following this revelation, a concerted shift in the design and implementation of professional learning was undertaken and again tracked through observation, survey, and interviews. The co-regulation experienced by staff after the program revision reinforced a sense of connection and inspiration that had long been absent, which, in turn, generated a collection of positive somatic and affective responses described as “palpable.” By encouraging educational leaders to predicate professional learning programs in the hallmarks of collective effervescence, the value of professional learning is underscored, leading to improved teaching practices, enhanced student learning outcomes, and increased job satisfaction.

Keywords : andragogy, emotional contagion, initiative fatigue, joy, professional learning, shared experience, social integration, transcendence of self

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