

Transnational Initiatives, Local Perspectives: The Potential of Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project to Support Teacher Professional Development in India

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Abstract : Recent research on the condition of school education in India has reaffirmed the importance of quality teacher professional development, especially in light of the rapid changes in teaching methods, learning theories, curriculum, and major shifts in information and technology that education systems are experiencing around the world. However, the quality of programs of teacher professional development in India is often uneven, in some cases non-existing. The educational authorities in India have long recognized this and have developed a range of programs to assist in-service teacher education. But, these programs have been mostly inadequate at improving the quality of teachers in India. Policy literature and reports indicate that the unevenness of these programs and more generally the lack of quality teacher professional development in India are due to factors such as a large number of teachers, budgetary constraints, top-down decision making, teacher overload, lack of infrastructure, and little or no follow-up. The disparity between the government stated goals for quality teacher professional development in India and its inability to meet the learning needs of teachers suggests that new interventions are needed. The realization that globalization has brought about an increase in the social, cultural, political and economic interconnectedness between countries has also given rise to transnational opportunities for education systems, such as India's, aiming to build their capacity to support teacher professional development. Moreover, new developments in communication technologies seem to present a plausible means of achieving high-quality professional development for teachers through the creation of social learning spaces, such as transnational learning networks. This case study investigates the potential of one such transnational learning network to support the quality of teacher professional development in India, namely the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project. It explores the participation of some fifteen teachers and their principals from BRIDGE participating schools in Delhi region of India; focusing on their professional development expectations from the BRIDGE program and account for their experiences in the program, in order to determine the program's potential for the professional development of teachers in this study.

Keywords : case study, Australia-Asia BRIDGE Project, teacher professional development, transnational learning networks

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