

A Framework for Increasing Staff Capability for Teaching and Learning across Multiple and Diverse Educational Sectors

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This paper describes the process of developing a Professional Development strategy within a diverse educational context that includes Higher Education, Vocational and Educational Training and English Language Teaching. We describe three components of the strategy; the categorization of Professional Development provision; best practice in provision of professional development; and performance rubrics for teaching staff. Three current PD projects are described with respect to the development of our PD strategy. The conclusion to the paper recognizes the value in balancing strategic thinking with an openness to teachers' expressed PD needs.

Introduction

Navitas is a global, dual sector, private educational provider offering programs at Higher Education and Vocational & Educational Training levels. Navitas also has a significant presence in English Language Teaching. Navitas Professional and English Programs (PEP) offers programs ranging across health sciences, criminology, social work, counselling and psychology. In this context PEP offers degree programs, Masters Programs and Vocational and Educational Training programs. PEP also offers English language programs for migrants, refugees, overseas students wishing to enter universities in Australia and individuals wishing to teaching English language. Within this context there is significant diversity with courses offered for immigrants with little or no spoken or written English through to courses in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL). The quality of teaching is a central concern for PEP and in this context two arms of Learning, Teaching and Technology Services (LTTs) – Learning and Teaching Innovation (LTI) and Learning Technologies and Systems (LTS) – provide professional development opportunities for teachers across the PEP programs.

Over time, LTTs had developed a suite of Professional Development (PD) offerings in a range of modes and formats, at differing levels, on an array of topics, for multiple audiences across PEP. For example, LTTs offers “how to training” for various technology systems such as Moodle and Blackboard along with pedagogically focussed courses around learning to teach online. Whilst these offerings were developed in response to business needs they had not been conceptualized as a whole. In order to make sense of this range of offerings, to identify overlaps and gaps in servicing, and to support coherency along with innovation in future development of PD initiatives, LTTs sought to identify and utilise a PD strategy that would include a framework within which LTTs PD provision might be located and interpreted. This paper reports on the search for and implementation of a framework, and presents additional learnings as PEP progressed towards a formal PD strategy. The paper concludes with a review of the need to locate the PEP PD strategy within a broader institutional capability development framework.

The PEP Environment

A number of factors informed the search for a framework to categorize PD offerings. First LTS and LTI have very distinct roles within PEP. The former unit focuses on supporting technologies and systems and the latter unit on curriculum services, teaching enhancements and teaching innovations. To some extent these different roles had played out in terms of LTS offering technical “how to” workshops and LTI offering pedagogically focussed PD on best practice with particular technologies. We were keen to overcome this dichotomy through an integrated approach to PD that would see LTS and LTI liaising to determine the relationship between technological and pedagogical PD and, wherever possible, to integrate the two. At the same time LTTs was largely perceived across PEP to be a unit that provided technical support in the use of technologies. The role of LTI in supporting teaching and learning was not widely recognised and we wanted a framework that would allow us to articulate the focus of our PD provision to our stakeholders. The key here was to surface the pedagogical dimension of our PD provision.

We carried out a literature search on categorizing PD. As a caveat, the literature on PD is voluminous (EdSurge, 2014) and we acknowledge that we may well have missed relevant papers. Our search yielded results that thought of PD in terms of the different PD approaches (Kennedy, 2005; Medlock, 2013) which was not our primary concern. Interestingly we did not surface any other ways to categorize PD until we came across results (Loughran, Mulhall, & Berry, 2004; Veal & Makinster, 1999) that conceptualized PD in terms of the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) model first articulated by Shulman (Shulman, 1986). This model represents the interplay of two forms of knowledge – pedagogical and content knowledge – required to teach effectively. The PCK model has been superseded by the Technological, Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Koehler, Mishra, & Yahya, 2007; Mishra & Koehler, 2006) which adds technological knowledge as an element required to teach effectively.

The TPACK model recommended itself to us as a means to categorize and represent our PD provision in terms of our concern to surface distinctions between technologically focused PD, pedagogically focused PD and PD that combines elements of both technology and pedagogy. It also recommended itself as going further by including content knowledge as a key dimension of teachers’ knowledge. A review of the TPACK literature identified a number of documents that framed PD in terms of the TPACK model, including a review of 36 studies addressing strategies to develop teachers’ TPACK skills (Voogt, Fisser, Pareja Roblin, Tondeur, & van Braak, 2013). This further reinforced our decision to adopt the TPACK model because we saw the potential for drawing on a significant literature base to underpin our own PD development work.

Professional Development Framework

The components of the TPACK model (See Figure 1 below) provide a way to conceptualize PD provision in a relatively nuanced way. For example, we can see from figure one that PD might be developed and framed as including technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. As another example, PD might also be developed and framed solely in terms of pedagogical content knowledge.

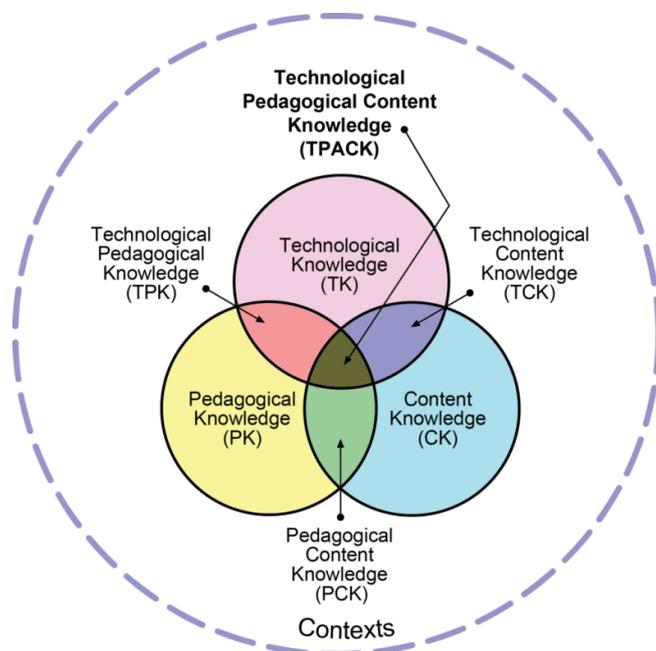


Figure 1. TPACK model (Koehler et al., 2007)

Using this model we reviewed LTTs PD provision and categorised the various offerings. New PD offerings developed since our original work have also been categorized using the TPACK framework. The results are shown in Table 1 below. Six out of twelve PD offerings fall into the TPACK category. That is, they operate at the interplay between technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and

content knowledge. For example, PEP offers Foundations of Teaching and Learning online courses which aim to teach teachers about good practice in online teaching. Teachers apply what they learn about technologies, pedagogies and the relationship to the content of their teaching to their own courses and are supported by facilitators in making changes to their current practices. We also provide PD that falls under technological pedagogical knowledge. For example, PEP Tech Talks are one hour online seminars themed around making purposeful use of technologies in teaching and learning. Particular disciplines / subject areas are not included in Tech Talks. The teaching technology sandbox is a space where teachers can use various technologies and is therefore framed in terms of technological knowledge. The same is true for LTTs web based resources that include for example “How To” guides for use of technologies such as Moodle and BlackBoard Collaborate. Ning provides an online collaborative learning space where teachers support one another. Informal PD opportunities in this space range across all the TPACK dimensions. The same is true for the BIG Day in which is a one day PD event for English Teachers. The day consists of a variety of presentations on different topics relevant to English Language Teachers. Finally, the Teaching and Learning Innovation Series consists of regular seminars on innovation topics relevant to teaching staff within Navitas PEP.

Table 1
PD Categories

Existing PD	TPACK Categorization
Foundations of Teaching and Learning Online - Essential Concepts	TPACK
Foundations of Learning and Teaching Online - Assessment	TPACK
Tech Talks Seminar Series	Technological Pedagogical
Teaching with Technology Sandbox	Technological
Ning Community for English Language Teachers	Contingent on Use
BIG Day In for English Language Teachers	Contingent on Presentations
Web based resources for core technologies	Technological
New PD	TPACK Categorization
Foundations of Teaching and Learning Online – Education Design	TPACK
Foundations of Teaching and Learning Online – Student Engagement	TPACK
Teaching and Learning Innovation Seminar Series	Contingent on Presentations
Bespoke support for curriculum and course developments	TPACK
Support for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning	TPACK

Having adopted the TPACK framework it makes sense for LTTs to gather much more information on teachers’ specific PD requirements relative to the TPACK skill set. There are validated TPACK survey instruments in the literature (Moroney & Haigh, 2011) that can provide LTTs with a way forward. This could happen at a divisional level through running a survey for all teachers. Equally however it could happen at the level of FoLTO courses and curriculum developments in order to tailor PD to specific needs.

Professional Development Best Practice

Categorizing PD in order to meet teachers’ needs is one thing. Delivering PD that actually meets teachers’ needs is an entirely different thing. Current thinking in the area of professional development suggests the need to move away from the decontextualized workshop format towards more authentic and active forms of professional development (de la Harpe & Mason, 2014). For example Wang et al, include active learning along with a connection to classroom work amongst the principles for effective PD (Wang, Hsu, Reeves, & Coster, 2014). Salmon and Wright stress the need to focus on “the learning design needs for specific units or programs of study, thus producing a more authentic and relevant experience for those taking part” (Salmon & Wright, 2014, p.4). Broadly speaking we are seeing a shift away from formal

courses that lead to the “accumulation of superficial knowledge” (de la Harpe & Mason, 2014, p.222). The call is instead for study that is situated in the work environment (Jefferson & Pollock, 2014), based on active learning techniques and engaged in continuously over a significant period of time (de la Harpe & Mason, 2014; Medlock, 2013). In addition to the literature our staff surveys strongly have indicated that teachers enjoy and value learning from one another.

Best practice thinking from the PD literature aligns to some degree with a rule that is utilized in business environments to understand how employees develop their knowledge and skills. The rule – known as the 70:20:10 rule – suggests that formal learning accounts for only 10% of workplace learning. Interaction with peers accounts for 20% of workplace learning. The remaining 70% of learning occurs through engaging with challenging projects / tasks. Whilst there seems to be little in the way of empirical evidence that the theory holds true (Jefferson & Pollock, 2014; Kajewski & Madsen, 2012), the value of thinking in these terms lies in the recognition “that employees are learning all the time—by observing, by making mistakes, through interactions with others and sometimes through formal course work” (Jefferson & Pollock, 2014). In other words the emphasis of PD needs to shift away from formal learning to embedded and collaborative learning.

Performance Rubrics

Having put a professional development framework in place and reflected on best practice PD, the LTTs team met to discuss progress. A key outcome from this meeting was that there was a gap in the PEP PD strategy with respect to being able to provide performance measures for teachers engaging in PD. Performance measures are important if teachers are to understand where they are with their teaching and what they might do in order to improve upon current performance. One of the better known professional standards frameworks is the Higher Education Academy United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework (The Higher Education Academy, 2011) levels of teaching performance that might be expected at different career stages. There are three dimensions of practice:

- Areas of activity undertaken by teachers and supporters of learning within HE;
- Core knowledge that is needed to carry out those activities at the appropriate level; and
- Professional values that someone performing these activities should embrace and exemplify.

The framework provides teachers with a way to judge their teaching performance. At the same time it provides a roadmap for progression in teaching. We considered a performance rubric to be important for a mature PD strategy as it would provide LTTs with a means to target PD to teachers at different stages of their careers whilst also providing teachers with a means for self-evaluation, reflection and planning for progression in teaching. At the time of writing we have not made progress on integrating performance rubrics into our PD strategy. However, we recognise the importance of doing so and will be working towards embedding rubrics in our PD provision.

Current Professional Development

At the time of writing we are working on a number of professional development initiatives that have been informed by the thinking in this paper. Two of these initiatives relate to professional development provision for English Language Teacher. These two projects make use of a social learning platform – Fuse (<http://www.fuseuniversal.com/>) – as the online space for the delivery of PD. In addition to providing a space for LTTs to create and deliver structured PD experiences, Fuse facilitates social and collaborative learning. Learners can upload content – videos, audio, documents, images etc. – as well as share links to content on the Internet. Users can also create screen casts from within the application which can be shared by other users. The use of Fuse aligns with some of the best practice PD principles outlined above. For example, study can be ongoing, situated in the work environment and directly related to what teachers do every day. Additionally Fuse was developed in terms of the 70:20:10 principle outlined earlier in this paper with the core idea being that learning that occurs as part of the work flow can be shared and built upon in the Fuse environment.

The first Fuse project involves English language teachers in Careers and Learning Skills (CLS) who will be supported in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to pass their six month observation test.

Support will come in the form of short video segments along with reflective exercise. However, the real power of Fuse lies in its ability to connect teachers with one another for knowledge sharing and peer support. For example, teachers can comment on content, create and upload their own content and share valuable resources and links with one another. This form of sharing mirrors teachers' real world activities where they share their knowledge with one another in the staffroom. From the perspective of management, Fuse has reporting features that allow teacher progress to be tracked against PD requirements. This means that the PD sits within a performance framework that matters to both the teachers and the managers.

The second Fuse project concerns teachers in English Foundational Skills (EFS). The purpose of the project is to put EFS induction materials in an online space for staff and managers to access as needed for induction purposes. The induction materials will be in a variety of formats including screencasts, videos and Blackboard Collaborate recordings and will have quizzes attached to the materials to inform trainees of their scores and give them a chance to review their understanding and take each quiz again. The EFS Induction project will ensure consistency in training materials and approach to training while helping managers with time management in training staff. Managers will also be able to generate reports on teacher PD that are required by the regulatory authorities. LTTs staff are working with EFS staff on how we can extend the use of Fuse to make use of the social affordances of the platform. The focus here will be teachers who are more established in their careers with EFS.

We are also offering a new short course, "*Foundations of Learning and Teaching On-Line: Student Engagement and Motivation*" that examines how teachers can support and encourage student engagement and motivation for learning in the online environment. The design of the module is predicated on an action learning approach to improving the effectiveness of teaching in an online environment. Drawing on the work of Brookfield (1995) on critically reflective teaching, we ask teachers to reflect on their teaching practice using the four lenses of our students' experience, the educational literature, teaching colleagues and teachers' own autobiographies. The module uses both reflection in action and reflection on action as teachers are not only students within this course but at the same time teachers in their own online courses. This provides a unique opportunity to both analyse teaching and learning activities whilst also considering and proposing informed changes to practice. The course design uses this action and experiential approach in response to the business need for targeted and results orientated development for teachers who have successfully completed a foundations course in online learning and teaching and who are now ready to consider, review and possibly change their practice, based on an informed and robust model.

Conclusions

We were initially driven in this project by a desire to categorize our PD so that we might conceptualize our offerings holistically whilst also representing our PD to our stakeholders. We achieved our aim by utilizing the TPACK framework. At the same time the TPACK model focussed us on delivering best practice PD that develops teachers' technological, pedagogical and content knowledge in ways that will enhance teaching and learning. Having been through the process of conceptualizing our PD we find ourselves returning positively to the fact that our PD provision was originally developed in response to business needs. In this context whether PD is categorized in terms of mode, content, level or aims, "*Professional development is a process. A habit-forming endeavour. An ongoing individual and institutional professional responsibility to seek, share, develop, and exchange the most needed and desired skill sets*" (Medlock, 2013). Therefore, developing PD responsively can be conceived of positively as meeting real need. This contrasts with, for example, simply delivering workshops which may or may not hit the mark (de la Harpe & Mason, 2014). Finally, in terms of a PD strategy we are now able to: conceptualize and represent our PD offerings; focus more clearly on developing PD in terms of best practice principles; and provide the Fuse environment as a place where teachers can engage in PD in their teaching and learning environments. We still have work to do around our strategy, particularly in terms of developing performance rubrics and this will be our next task.

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