

No Size Fits All: Design Considerations for Networked Professional Development in Higher Education

Daniela Gachago

*Centre for Innovative Educational Technology, Cape Peninsula University of Technology,
gachagod@gmail.com*

Nicola Pallitt

*Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL), Rhodes University,
n.pallitt@ru.ac.za*

Maha Bali

Center for Learning and Teaching, American University in Cairo (AUC), Bali@aucegypt.edu

Abstract

This paper develops a framework for design considerations that can be used to analyse or design networked professional development (NPD) in higher education (HE) contexts. The model was developed after reflecting on three professional development (PD) courses, each with facilitators who are academic developers across the African continent. Using a collaborative autoethnographic methodology (Bali, Crawford, Jessen, Signorelli, Zamora, 2015), the three authors reflect on design considerations for different forms of blended and online PD courses, based on their experiences of designing and/or facilitating these interventions and with PD more broadly. We argue that design considerations, such as context, have become more complex and that understanding the dynamics between them are important. We suggest that course designs can be positioned along a range of dimensions, namely: open/closed, structured/unstructured, facilitated/unfacilitated, certified/uncertified, with/without date commitments, homogenous versus autonomous learning path, content vs process centric, serious vs playful and individual vs collaborative. Our design considerations framework is not meant to judge courses or provide a formula for how best to design them, but rather to highlight how courses can be understood on each of the dimensions we identify, and how design decisions place a course in particular positions along the spectrum, depending on context. We noted some relationships among dimensions and links to learning theories. We also identified various tensions that arise in the design of NPD, such as between academic developers' pedagogical advocacy vs. usefulness, the need to maintain volunteerism without exploitation of affective labour, and the struggle to create spaces for agency within institutional rules.

Keywords

online professional development, academic development, faculty development, online learning, blended learning, networked learning, learning design, instructional design, design considerations, connectivism, connected learning

Introduction

Academic staff juggle multiple responsibilities including teaching, research, leadership, professional involvement, community engagement and administration, so it is often difficult to make time for voluntary, non-certified Professional Development (PD). While literature on PD is growing, there is less research on the potential of PD via networked learning (which emphasizes learner collaboration and autonomy - McConnell et al cited in Bali & Zamora, n.d.), whether conducted fully online or in blended formats (Coswatte Mohr &

Sheldon, 2017)¹. This paper reflects on three PD interventions² across the African continent: a blended course at a South African institution, a fully online course offered across the African continent and an online curriculum offered globally.

Using a Collaborative Autoethnographic methodology (Bali, Crawford, Jessen, Signorelli, Zamora, 2015), the three authors reflect on design considerations for different forms of NPD courses, based on their experiences of designing and/or facilitating NPD. We argue that design considerations, such as context, have become more complex and that understanding the dynamics between them are important for designing networked learning experiences. We suggest that course designs can be positioned along a range of dimensions, such as open/closed, structured/unstructured, facilitated/unfacilitated, or certified/uncertified. Using our three courses we will make a case for context-sensitive, complex and nuanced course designs, which need to be continuously reviewed and redesigned. While our cases are located in the landscape of PD, it may also be useful for emerging forms of blended and online university courses.

Literature review

Although interest in professional or academic staff development (as it is called on the African continent) is growing, there seems to be consent that in general it follows a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach and is relatively inflexible in terms of time and space, making it difficult for lecturers to participate equitably (Bali & Caines, 2018; Rhode, Richter, & Miller, 2017). There is also a lack of research on NPD, essential to develop academics’ understanding of the differences between teaching face-to-face (f2f) and online (Coswatte Mohr & Sheldon, 2017).

While studies on networked learning and design in Higher Education (HE) exist, few deal with design considerations of NPD courses for educators. Research indicates that effective PD is typically long-term, offers opportunities for practical application, is integrated in the educators’ daily practice, includes collegial sharing, is project or action research based, and is well supported (McQuiggan, 2011). There is a small but growing field in the literature that explores more flexible, open, equitable approaches to PD (Bali & Caines, 2018). These approaches move PD online, allowing them to be ‘untethered’, which Leafstadt and Pacansky-Brock (2016, n.p.) define as ‘learner-centered, grounded in the use of online networks to share practices, and [which do] not require faculty to be on campus to learn. It places value on sharing and the relational ties between faculty, as opposed to the number of people in a room at a particular time’. However, literature on design principles for online and blended teacher PD (CADRE, 2017) and design issues resulting from lessons learned from online PD projects tend to read as ‘do’s and don’ts’, recipes or advice (e.g. Vrasidas & Zembylas, 2004; Nokaelinen, 2006). We did not find studies that contrast the designs of NPD courses across different contexts, or studies located in or written by practitioners in the Global South related to NPD courses in HE contexts in Africa. This is not unique to studies of networked learning, but to the field of PD more broadly, where approaches “have been dominated by literature from the global North, which does not take into account conditions in resource-constrained environments” (Leibowitz, Vorster & Ndebele, 2016).

Goodyear (2009) proposes design considerations for networked learning located on an axis linking space, place and activity as an indirect approach, whereby activities, spaces and organisations that we design rely on being inhabited by the teachers and learners who will ‘enact’ our designs. While this framework is useful for analysing networked learning practices, it is less useful for *designing* networked learning experiences. The varieties of networked courses have multiplied since Goodyear’s earlier work. We now have a greater variety of online platforms and tools, social media, as well as the open education movement where different approaches to ‘open’ in relation to online courses have emerged since MOOCs. Goodyear’s (2009) indirect approach involves different kinds of relationships between the three axes which differs from the interrelations of multiple design considerations where particular combinations can result in different kinds of opportunities and constraints. In

¹ We follow McConnell et al in defining ‘networked learning’, who position the philosophical roots of networked learning in the work of Dewey and Freire. Emphasizing relationships and collaboration rather than technology, networked learning promotes openness in attitude, learner collaboration, self-directed learning, and authentic learning. Goodyear (2019) adds the element of choice and control over how and how much one participates to the definition of NPD. While networked learning includes both offline and online learning, connectivism describes networked learning enhanced by social media (see Bali & Zamora, n.d.).

² We acknowledge that ‘development’ and ‘intervention’ are contested and normative concepts that imply a deficit when used in the HE context (Quinn, 2012).

this paper, we argue that design considerations have become more complex and that understanding the dynamics between them are important for designing networked learning experiences.

Methodology

We chose to build our framework on concrete experiences we had in developing networked courses in HE contexts. We are academic developers, supporting others with their teaching, yet the contexts of our courses are different, and providing rich, thick description of those differences allowed us to tease out various dimensions involved in designing such courses. Over the course of several weeks, we each explained our different courses to each other, wrote narratives, and discussed them together, in order to compare their designs and what influenced the design decisions. We commented on each other's drafts in order to clarify each narrative further.

Collaborative Autoethnography (CAE) involves the collective negotiation of meaning and interpretation based on our individual experiences expressed as narratives, then relating what we have to the literature (Geist-Martin, et al., 2010). We feel that autoethnography “challenges the hegemony of objectivity or the artificial distancing of self from one’s research subjects” (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 18). CAE lies within the interpretive/critical research tradition and so does not conform to scientific/positivistic measures of validity and rigor. Autoethnography “seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Conducting collaborative research enabled us to collectively question, revise and refine our individual interpretations and conclusions. Our process of developing our model was iterative, growing from synchronous conversations, Google docs, WhatsApp chats, emails, and a shared Google Draw to visually compare our own experiences to our developing model (see Figure 1). The detailed narratives are not included in this document (due to space limitations) but are available in this commentable Google doc: <http://bit.ly/NoSizeFitsAll>

Findings & Analysis: Design considerations for NPD courses

The following section discusses three NPD courses where the authors have been involved in the design and/or facilitation along 11 dimensions which emerged through the process of reflecting on our courses, their similarities and differences in design: Facilitation, Openness, Structure, Voluntariness, Certification, Linearity, Eventiness, Content vs Process/Experience, Learning path, Playfulness and Collaboration (see table 1).

Course 1: Institutional course at a university in the Western Cape, South Africa (FLD)

Curriculum development is a complex process that requires a myriad of different skills and knowledges. Universities of Technologies in South Africa are undergoing an intense process of transformation including re-circulation of its qualifications (Engel-Hills, Winberg & Rip, 2019). The institution I am based at is required to re-circulate more than 60 programmes before 2021. The Curriculum Officers’ (CO’s) project was introduced in 2012 at the institution to address the capacity development of COs in their respective departments to develop these new qualifications. Key concepts emphasised are the promotion of greater inclusivity amongst students at our institution, including making the curriculum more meaningful, and to ensure greater flexibility in the delivery of teaching and learning. Our Centre works primarily with teams that design postgraduate diplomas and Honors degrees, which target learners in employment and need to offer increased flexibility.

In order to support these CO’s we decided to develop a blended learning short course (Entitled ‘Re-imagining Curriculum - Towards Flexible Learning Design’, FLD in short) a collaboration of the Curriculum Development Unit and our Centre. We have been running blended course design workshops for a while, adopting ideas and structures from the field of design thinking, such as focusing on learner empathy, collaboration, experimentation, risk-taking, and problem orientation. Rejecting a ‘one-model-suits-all’ approach, we developed a methodology that considers disciplinary-context through design activities such as persona development, knowledge trees and storyboarding. These are hands-on, fun activities, which involve a lot of post-its, colorful pens and flipchart paper, but also conversations, discussions and sharing across discipline and faculty. We are also trying to encourage our colleagues to take more risks and work with possible failure, moving away from a desire for perfectionism, so abundant in HE. By creating safe spaces to experiment with technologies, reflect on what worked and what didn’t, we aim to develop creative confidence in lecturers.

We offered the first iteration of this course over a period of 6 months f2f with 4-hour workshops every three weeks. In these workshops, a range of facilitators from the institution presented on important topics around curriculum design, and design teams were supported in design activities to help them develop the necessary documentation for submission of their qualification. Design happened ‘on the fly’, workshop by workshop,

responding to participants' feedback. Approximately 40 participants completed the course. Participants in their feedback commented on the vibrant atmosphere and the opportunity to engage with colleagues from different departments and faculties. Participants also spoke about the importance of action and reflection. Some design teams managed to work in parallel on their design activities, but not all. For those who did, using Google Docs allowed facilitators to give regular feedback.

However, although this was a great learning experience for both lecturers and facilitators, workshops have limitations. We are a small team and not able to scale this kind of intervention across our multi-campus institution and for the approximately 800 academics we support. This case study reflects on the second iteration of the course, which we decided to offer in a blended learning format. We chose this format to allow for more flexibility in terms of course participation for lecturers unable to attend due to their geographical location, but also workload, and to allow for a more authentic modelling of flexible/blended learning course designs.

This course runs over three months, with new topics released every two weeks on our institutional LMS, Blackboard. Weekly activities for Module 1, which focuses on Curriculum Design, follow a linear online learning structure: a screencast with an overview of the topic, some readings, a topic for the discussion forum and a reflective blog task for participants to create 'notes to self' about the content covered to highlight what would be of importance for their own projects. In total participants are expected to spend 2-3 hours a week on online activities. The module content and structure were set up before course start, although facilitators create content as the module progresses. Participants self-assess progress by ticking completed topics off. Participation is voluntary, although some of the participants might be sent by their Head of Departments (HOD) if they are working on new qualifications. Participants receive a certificate by the institution for completion of the module. The course is not accredited.

We have just finished the first module of the online course. What we can already see is that the model of engagement in workshops based on our combination of presentations/design activities/discussions, fueled by our own passion for flexible course design, is difficult to replicate online. Scheduled workshops allow for participants to carve out time to engage in conversations and learning that is difficult to achieve in an online context. This is aggravated, if there is no incentive to participate beyond personal interest. Also, the beauty of f2f engagements, the break from normal day-to-day work, to engage with colleagues across the institution, falls by the wayside. Furthermore, Module 1 focused on Curriculum Theory and is content-heavy, and often quite dry and procedural, which makes it difficult for self-study. We are now thinking of how to offer Module 2 to allow more engagement. This module will focus on flexible and blended course design and could potentially be more experience- and process-oriented. It is also not as content and theory heavy. We are planning to offer more synchronous engagement through weekly webinars, which should allow participants to adhere to a more structured learning routine and allow for more social learning and continuing, deepening conversations. We are also thinking of reducing the independent/online learning part to one or two online activities, which will focus on collaboration, such as collective annotation of readings and videos. We hope to find ways of re-inserting the atmosphere of joy and playfulness that usually characterize our f2f PD activities.

Course 2: Facilitating Online (FO), regional outlook (Africa)

This fully online Africa-wide course is offered by e/merge Africa, an online PD network hosted by the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at the University of Cape Town. It is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. A team of facilitators (usually three) from across the continent and two course conveners led cohorts consisting of (usually) 20 to 30 participants. The course provides opportunities for educators and educational technologists to develop the necessary orientation and practices to become effective online facilitators. It adopts an active and experiential approach and is based on principles of fostering online learning communities, playful and reflective learning. Learners are expected to spend up to eight hours a week on course activities, and get a UCT short course certificate of completion for completing 75% of the assessed activities of the course including some mandatory activities.

While the course is a response to a continent-wide capacity building need, it attracts mainly Anglophone Africans as the course is offered in English. Ease of communication in English may be a hidden barrier. The majority of course participants are not first-language English speakers and writers. For many, English is their third or fourth language. Most instances of the course consist of half the participants being from South African universities and the rest from other African countries, predominantly Nigeria, Kenya and Swaziland. Participant diversity in relation to geographic location, job roles, educational backgrounds, experiences and exposure to blended and online learning are important features to achieve the necessary diversity and 'critical mass' for a successful course cohort.

While participation in the course is subject to application and participant activity takes place in a closed course site, the LMS used at UCT is open source (Sakai) and course materials are openly licensed. The course leader's guide is published as an OER and an open version of the course site without participant activity is available for view and LMS export upon request. Aspects of the course and course activities have been adapted by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) and the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa as part of a range of PD offerings.

The advertised length of the course is eight weeks. This includes a Week 0: Arrival online orientation week where participants can explore navigating basic information on the course site such as the course program and information about the conveners and facilitators. While there are suggested deadlines, the course structure includes three consolidation weeks where participants are able to catch up on activities and reflect. At the start of each week following a consolidation week, activities in discussion forums from earlier weeks are closed and participants are encouraged to progress with the course together. Getting a critical mass of participants to move along together through each stage of the course activities is crucial. So while the deadlines are more flexible, they are not overly so. Participants keep track of their own completion of activities on a dashboard called 'My Progress'. The different course weeks and activities are released in stages to avoid overwhelming participants. As the course progresses, the types of activities become more complex and the information on the site overall becomes more.

During the course, participants engage in individual and collaborative online learning activities. The right combination of these is important, as well as the use of appropriate tools at different stages of the course. Participants experience the use of different tools as the course progresses rather than all at once. At first, the course experience is likened to that of a student taking an online course and by Week 2, once they are comfortable in the space together and know each other better they take on a more active role as emerging online facilitators in the form of peer facilitation. Through experiencing online facilitation strategies modelled by the facilitation team, they start to use these themselves. From Week 3 - Week 5 participants each take on an online facilitation task in which they lead an online conversation.

Assessment in the course involves keeping track of satisfactory completion of activities rather than measuring how well a participant is progressing through the award of a grade for participant performance in the course. Individualized feedback happens via email on items such as their online facilitation capabilities, blog posts where facilitators and course participants comment on individual reflections, and end of course feedback on personal development plans. Some participants are more invested than others or become invested more or less as the course progresses, owing to diverse personal motivations and circumstances.

In addition to facilitated forum discussions, weekly synchronous online meetings allow for facilitators and course participants to share their voices. The potential for a more human connection and energy of the live meetings should not be underestimated. In addition to course progress dashboards, the weekly live meetings assist in clarifying, extending and deepening engagement with course activities. Each live meeting starts with ice-breakers where course participants and facilitators share their highlights for the week, acknowledging our lives outside of the course. Weekly reflections are encouraged in the form of individual reflections in the learning journals and shared reflections in the forum, where each week has a dedicated topic for reflecting on the week's course activities.

The course seeks to grow a community of practice of online facilitators in Africa, primarily in the public HE sector. Participants stay connected via a public Facebook group (across cohorts) and a private LinkedIn group (per cohort) after the course. They also most often become e/merge Africa members and join webinars and online conferences offered by the network. Many go on to promote practices of online facilitation and blended and online teaching and learning at their institutions and present at national conferences and symposiums. Some even present back to the e/merge Africa network about developments in their contexts. Understanding the motivations and values of participants and how these are tied to incentives and interest in being part of a broader community during and beyond the course is important. Many courses are learning communities and few are communities of practice, so how participants come to understand this difference and deciding which one suits their needs is important to consider. We are currently collecting value creation stories from course participants and will soon be designing a version of this course that global participants can apply to join.

Course 3: Equity Unbound (EqU), international collaboration

EqU is an “equity-focused, open, connected, intercultural learning experience across classes, countries and contexts”³. It is a collaboration between me, author 3 (American University in Cairo), Mia Zamora (Kean University in New Jersey, US) and Catherine Cronin (at the time employed at National University of Ireland, Galway). I teach a course that I designed myself locally at the American University in Cairo in Egypt (where English is the language of instruction) that focuses on digital literacies and intercultural learning. I felt students would benefit from additional forms of equity-focused intercultural interaction that build on connected learning principles (see Ito et al, 2013) which helped me personally with my own teaching.

The website curates relevant resources (reading, videos, podcasts) and activities on a variety of themes, and suggested dates for doing certain activities so that we can communicate and collaborate with others around the world. A few other educators joined in, whether to do similar activities, to propose other activities, or to join some of our live “studio visits” (live video conversations with experts) to discuss the various topics.

We intended EqU to be less structured than traditional courses, mainly because we consider ourselves to be emergent teachers: we allow our courses to evolve in different directions, depending on how it flows that particular semester for those students. It is a teaching philosophy and influenced by our experiences with connectivist MOOCs (see Bali et al, 2015) which put less emphasis on content and structure, and more emphasis on relationships and connecting/networking. However, for other educators to participate with their students, we added some "eventiness" that gave it more structure and content-focus than actually happens in our f2f classes.

EqU curriculum was open in several ways: the curated materials were openly accessible, anyone who had internet could participate and even contribute resources, and activities like public social annotation and Twitter chats were low barriers to entry and exit. But it was closed in other ways: a lot happened behind the scenes, and facilitators controlled the website. There was no certification for open participants.

EqU was not a cMOOC, but inserts connected learning into regular courses. Facilitators taught their f2f courses, curated online content and led Twitter chats and studio visits, but did not facilitate otherwise. Online engagement was largely via our website for disseminating information about upcoming events, Twitter and Hypothes.is for some semi-synchronous interactions like fast and slow Twitter chats and collaborative annotation, and via Google docs. Studio visits were the synchronous video element, which became a source of emotional support for us, the facilitators. I still used an LMS for assignments and grades within my class.

EqU became a supportive learning community for educators interested in equity and digital literacy but did not succeed as much in engaging our students in sustained interaction. We are in the process of creating a new iteration using the same site starting September 2019.

A Comparison Across Dimensions

Through discussing differences and similarities between our PD courses, we developed a framework for design considerations along 11 dimensions. Table 1 describes where each of our courses lies on the spectrum and Figure 1 represents it visually.

Table 1: Summary of courses along dimensions of NPD

Dimension	Flexible Learning Design - FLD	Facilitating Online - FO	Equity Unbound - EqU
Facilitation: to what extent were there facilitators working directly with learners?	There are weekly emails by facilitator but there are no further efforts to build community.	Daily announcements, individual progress reports shared during consolidation weeks, facilitated asynchronous activities, weekly online meeting.	Facilitators managed site, Twitter and facilitated studio visits. No learning facilitation for open participants, only our own students.
Openness: to what extent was course open to any participants	Closed course site. Only open to institutional participants. No pre-requirements. Invites are sent out	Open license version of the course site (without participant activity) and course leader's	Open to anyone to participate, public website and social media presence, public livestreamed

³ See <http://unboundeq.creativitycourse.org/about> and on Twitter @unboundeq #unboundeq

outside an institution, and were materials openly accessible	by institutional channels, participants apply via online form.	guide. Course site is built using an institutional instance of open source LMS, Sakai. There are selection and funding criteria.	and recorded studio visits. Also open to anyone to contribute but only facilitators controlled web and Twitter content.
Structure: to what extent was there course structure that was planned and followed	Highly structured. Bi-weekly release of contents. Each topic follows the same structure: intro/screencast/reading/discussion on forum and reflective blog.	Very structured with some flexibility, since participants have considerable leeway to work around their ongoing work and family commitments.	Semi-structured. Fortnightly themes; some events had dates/times like Twitter quick or slow chats and studio visits, but asynchronous possible.
Voluntariness (related to structure): to what extent was participation of learners' voluntary versus part of something mandatory	Voluntary participation. Might be recommended by HOD if participant is part of curriculum design team.	Support from a line manager or HOD required for application.. Often participants want to take the course but for some, it is recommended to them by a colleague / boss. Participant agency is crucial for course completion.	Participation to anyone other than students in class was completely voluntary. They could join any activity whenever they wanted or use the site in other ways. The facilitators themselves were unpaid volunteers.
Linearity (related to structure): to what extent does the course flow in a particular order?	Linear.	Collaborative activities within a particular time frame. Critical mass and energy - focused rather than dispersed across too many activities is encouraged.	Fortnightly themes had dates so linear in that sense. But outside of synchronous activities, anyone could engage with the course in any way.
Certification: was there certification at the end for completion?	Institutional certificate of attendance (no credits)	UCT short course certificate for successful course completion i.e. 75% completion of course activities and all mandatory activities.	No certification for open participants. Students in our courses got credit for the course they took, which only partly included Equity Unbound.
'Eventiness' - deadlines and commitments	New contents are released every two weeks. Workshops scheduled every 3 weeks.	Consolidation weeks to catch up on activities two weeks prior after which activities are 'closed'. Some mandatory activities. Voluntary weekly online meeting (as a group).	Events included studio visits, Twitter and annotation activities over an hour or several days. No deadlines. Students in our courses had deadlines for things they did for course credit.
Content vs process: extent that course is designed around content/learning outcomes vs process goals (Smith, 2000)	Content-driven. Following HEQSF application forms for new qualifications. Little sharing of experiences.	A combination of process and content. As learning in this course is experiential people and processes are invisible 'content'. Value creation stories in progress indicate that networking and sharing of diverse experiences is valued among course participants.	Informed by connected learning, open pedagogy and process/critical curriculum approach. Values of equity and openness determine contents, not learning outcomes.
Homogeneous learning path versus autonomous pathways. (See Crosslin, 2018)	Homogeneous learning path, although participants are free to engage with the contents they are interested in.	While there is a designed path, participants can lead their own topics of interest for the facilitation task.	External participants choose learning path or follow the theme dates. Students in my class had some freedoms and some set deadlines for common experiences.
Playfulness: to what extent was "fun" used?	Low level of playfulness/experimentation online. Design activities usually done during workshop.	Playful learning is a course principle but depends on participants' perception of playfulness.	Playful learning was never explicitly used in our wording, but seems to come naturally to us. Example is Twitter Scavenger Hunt activity.
Collaboration: to what extent is collaboration	No collaboration. Mainly self-study and development of	A combination, the course design involves a progression from	Some interaction on activities like studio visit and Twitter

built into the course design?	qualification. Facilitators are drawn from the institution.	noticing individual needs to ways of being and working together. The course scaffolds socialization necessary to facilitate collaborative learning.	chats. But no collaboration towards a particular product by participants. Students in my own courses did collaborative activities outside Eq.
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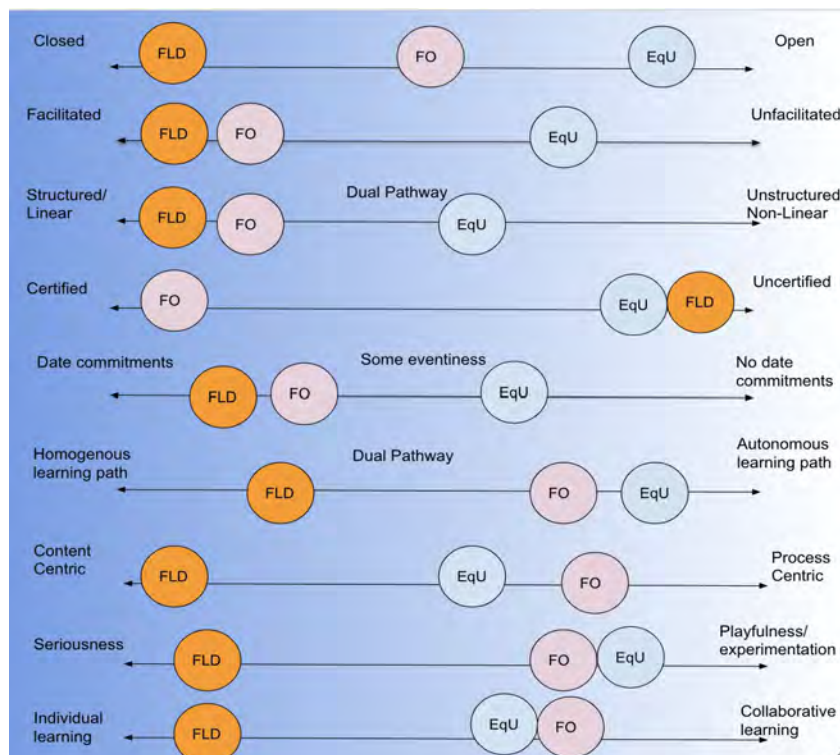


Figure 1: The three courses mapped along the dimensions of NPD

Anderson & Dron (2011) differentiate three generations of online/distance learning pedagogy: those based on cognitive-behavioral theory (not networked, self-paced or didactic online learning), those based on social constructivist theory (online learning for small numbers of participants within an LMS/VLE) and those that use connectivist approaches (Siemens, 2005) and leverage social media and the open web, which McConnell et al (2011) suggested would support networked learning more than designs confined within closed platforms.

A pattern emerged from the dimensions we described above. We noted that dimensions along the right-hand side tended towards more open and connectivist learning principles, whereas items towards the left-hand side and middle tended towards more traditional networked learning within LMS/institutional boundaries. For example, EqU, explicitly based on connectivist/connected learning encouraged more openness, less structure, more collaboration and less facilitation than other designs. FLD was built on a more social constructivist approach and thus had stronger facilitation and more structure within a closed platform. FO shows a combination of social constructivist and connectivist approaches, offering more autonomy and collaboration than FLD, and yet is more facilitated and structured but less open than EqU. Dual pathway approaches (e.g. Crosslin), which are not studied here, would give learners a choice between a more socially constructivist networked course and a more open, connectivist learning experience. Note that a cognitive-behavioral approach would actually mix between sides of the spectrum, in being highly structured, content-centric and individual but unfacilitated and may or may not offer autonomy and playfulness, and may or may not have specific dates and certification (the first iteration of FLD would be positioned here).

Emerging Tensions in NPD

Through the CAE process and working with the framework three broader tensions emerged which we will discuss below: the tension between advocacy and usefulness; the tension between promoting choice and agency vs institutional expectations and rules and finally the issue of certification, volunteerism, and unpaid labor.

Advocacy and Usefulness

Conducting PD for lecturers is complex, as we often think of modelling something that is meaningful and transferable to lecturers and at the same time pushes them out of their comfort zones, challenging teaching and learning practices. Meanwhile, we realize that lecturers are adult learners, not undergraduate students. To advocate for university teaching that promotes ownership and agency, PD for educators can model such practices (Bali & Caines, 2018).

However, designing and facilitating such learning experiences is difficult on three fronts: First, there are often insufficient numbers of staff with enough experience to design these activities. This is partly why EqU and FO have multiple facilitators from different institutions. Secondly, lecturers may resist new ways of learning and may not manage their time or engage at all. FLD faculty enjoyed the f2f aspects of courses, but online engagement was much lower. Teräs (2016) suggests to be careful and work with/support the 'learning culture shock', the accustomisation process the learners go through and which resembles the accustomisation phases in a new cultural environment. Also, transferring passion and enthusiasm of facilitators in f2f contexts into the online spaces is difficult. Online facilitation is a complex skill that is honed with experience. Finally, from our experience, it is often difficult for lecturers to implement more flexible approaches to teaching in credit-bearing courses, especially particular larger first-year courses, or in STEM fields, for example.

We acknowledge educators' desire for f2f contact and collaboration/networking. Relationship-building and on-going collaboration between staff developers and academics is important (Gachago et al, 2017). The value of doing so online becomes more visible when interaction online is with people in different countries or cities but who share a common goal or purpose, such as learning to teach online in Africa (as with FO) or equity-focused approaches to intercultural and digital learning (as with EqU).

As our cases have shown, it is important for academic developers to remain aware of, and take risks to explore, different pedagogical approaches. However, we also risk leaving colleagues in our academic development centres behind - and becoming more distant from educators at our own institutions who prefer teaching in familiar ways. We recognised in our conversation the need for a balance between remaining up-to-date in our field and growing our external networks of like-minded educators while continuing to be relevant and useful in our institutional context and for the spectrum of educators with various teaching philosophies.

It is also crucially important to ensure equitable access to the learning opportunities we offer for PD, and to recognize that a course may be successful for particular learners and not others (Bali & Caines, 2018). For example, for people whose students are not on Twitter or cannot join for safety reasons, some parts of EqU were inaccessible. For some people, YouTube is blocked by institutional firewalls. The FO course attempts to alleviate some of these issues by creating a collaborative networked environment within the course, e.g. using the blog and discussion forums of an LMS rather than public blogs and social media.

Choice and Agency vs Institutional Expectations / Rules

Our model challenges a one-size-fits-all approach and promotes recognition of disciplinary and institutional contexts. Thinking through the different dimensions of our framework could support staff developers to choose the right model for their own context and audience. Choice and agency are paramount, both for staff developers and lecturers. But this may clash with institutional expectations; eLearning policies may favour institutional LMSs over open approaches, thus limiting engagement and online collaboration and engagement. What helped us think through our model was the concept of working along a continuum and shifting dimensions along it, even if shifts are incremental. We all have some space to shift our pedagogical practices - even if one small step at a time. Champions and mentors are needed to guide others on such a journey. This change also needs sustained engagement, experimentation, reflection and continuous openness to new ideas and approaches to help teachers and learners engage with ideas, content, and each other.

Certification, Volunteerism, and Unpaid Labour

Certification recognizes people's work as valid accomplishments. But sometimes there are other forms of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation that drive learner commitment. People tend to participate in Twitter Scavenger Hunt activities because they found it "fun" and they like the brief connection with students. Sometimes, as with EqU, participants stay for the social/affective aspects of being part of a community of like-minded educators.

This may explain why EqU worked more for educators than students - the educators needed this support, which possibly was not available within their institutions. On the other hand, if we offer uncertified/unaccredited courses in competition with the multiple responsibilities that academics have to juggle, we might have to let go of the idea of ‘completing’ a course, and rather allow academics to dip in and dip out as they can and wish. Facilitators and participants were sometimes uncompensated and unrecognized in any formal way for work. There is intrinsic motivation, and learning and community are often their own reward without need for financial compensation. However, not everyone can afford to volunteer their time in these ways. Also free participation and unpaid labour are not a sustainable model for long-term PD.

Concluding remarks

In this paper we suggest a framework for design considerations for networked learning for PD drawing on our own practices. This framework is neither prescriptive nor judgemental: each design consideration is a dimension, and location on the spectrum is contextual: there is no “best practice”, no size fits all, and each decision should be gauged according to its fit for purpose, including readiness and philosophy of those designing and facilitating the learning experiences, institutional constraints or lack thereof, and participants’ characteristics and needs.

This model can support decision-making for course creation and revision, helping designers identify areas to tweak along the spectrum of one or more dimensions to meet certain goals. It can also be used to analyze courses, which may result in adjustments to the model. It can help envision the future of a course, and what we desire to achieve, such as creating pathways to open, creative, collaborative networked PD. We invite fellow educators, designers and developers to use the model to contrast and discuss these and additional design considerations and, in the process, engage with their own beliefs and assumptions. We invite feedback and further development of this model and approach.

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