

Facilitating the Professional Growth of Teachers in Networked Learning Communities (NLC)

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Intended Audience

Facilitators of teacher-based NLC

Content Level

Intermediate (for facilitators who are forming or have formed NLC of teachers)

Workshop Description

Networked learning among teachers is a powerful form of professional learning as such learning informs and helps them understand their work, their influence, and their effects on themselves, their peers and their students (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). In Singapore, one of our key professional development programmes is engaging teachers in networked learning communities or NLCs. We define NLCs as networks of teachers across schools learning from one another, with one another, and on behalf of others. Networked learning is the process where individuals from different schools come together in a network to engage in purposeful and sustained developmental activities, informed by the public knowledge base, utilising their own know-how and co-constructing knowledge together (Jackson & Temperley, 2007).

One of our greatest challenges in championing NLCs is facilitating and ensuring the growth of the teachers involved. While there are numerous studies which recognise the values and purpose of NLC (e.g., Cousin & Deepwell, 2005; Day, Hadfield, & Kellow, 2002; Jopling, 2006; Katz & Earl, 2007; Lieberman, 2000), as well as studies suggesting principles and features to foster successful NLCs (e.g., Jackson & Temperley, 2007; Katz & Earl, 2010), there is a surprising lack of literature on models that operationalise networked learning. Our solution is to develop a networked learning model that guides facilitators of networked learning communities in the learning and growth of their members. In developing this model, we are informed by existing literature as well as our own research on factors of successful NLCs. We call our research-informed model SPAR© which is short for Seeding, Planning, Applying, Reviewing, Celebrating. Embedded within the SPAR© model are several established protocols and tools to guide NLC facilitators in facilitating purposeful and deep networked learning. While the model is designed and intended for teachers and teacher-educators, we believe the underlying processes will also be relevant to other non-teacher related networked learning communities. We hope to share our research-informed model with participants at NLC 2016.

Participant Outcomes

Participants will:

- understand the various principles of networked learning in the education context;
- learn about a networked learning model developed and used by the Academy of Singapore Teachers in facilitating the growth of NLCs;
- experience some tools and protocols embedded within the networked learning model; and
- have meaningful conversations with professional learning leaders from the Academy of Singapore Teachers in facilitating NLCs.

Workshop Alignment

Our workshop aligns with the theme: Designs for Networked Learning as we demonstrate to NLC facilitators how professional learning of teachers involved in NLCs can be brought about through purposeful and systematic facilitation.

Workshop Process

- 1) Introduction (20 minutes): We introduce ourselves, as well as the objectives and learning outcomes of this workshop. We then carry out an ice-breaking activity for table participants.
- 2) Context of Singapore education system and NLCs in Singapore (10 minutes): We provide a background of the Singapore education system and in particular, of NLCs.
- 3) Overview of networked learning principles (20 minutes): We introduce principles informing our model of networked learning. We ask participants to co-construct maps, connecting various domains of the literature to have an informed understanding of networked learning.
- 3) The SPAR© Model of Networked Learning (30 minutes): We introduce our model developed and used by professional learning leaders at the Academy of Singapore Teachers in their NLC facilitation. We share our research on networked learning. We ask participants to try out some of the tools and protocols embedded within the model.
- 4) Conversation about NLCs (10 minutes): We have a professional dialogue with fellow NLC facilitators on facilitating successful networked learning.

Impact of model

This workshop seeks to provide participants with a networked learning model. We are informed by the literature on networked learning in educational contexts (e.g., Jackson & Temperley, 2007; Katz & Earl, 2010) as well as our own research on factors for successful networked learning. We have used this model to guide us in the formation and facilitation of our NLCs of Singapore teachers.

Presenter Qualifications

Ms. Irene Tan is a Principal Master Teacher with the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST), looking into planning of professional learning for teachers. She leads Master Teachers in various subjects and collaborates with educational leaders as well as strategic partners in raising the professional standards of the Singapore teachers. She started her teaching career as a Chemistry teacher in a Singapore school. Over the past 25 years, she has assumed the role of head of department and Master Teacher (Chemistry). She conducts workshops, develops resources, leads networked learning and continues to be active in research projects, publications and presentations at local and international conferences. She holds several concurrent appointments as the Chairman of Science Teachers Association of Singapore (STAS), First Vice Chairman of Singapore Association for the Advancement of Science (SAAS), Council member of Singapore National Academy of Science (SNAS) as well as a Governing Board Member for Science for the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education (SEAMEO).

Dr. Sao-Ee GOH is a Senior Specialist with AST, looking into research in professional learning. He began his teaching career as a physics teacher in a Singapore school. Over the past thirteen years, he has also worked with teachers in the School District of Philadelphia and taught student-teachers in science methods courses. He is an accomplished science textbook writer whose works include *My Pals Are Here!*. To date, his academic publications include professional development and complex systems in journals and proceedings. He did his undergraduate and master programmes at University of Oxford, England, and completed his Ph.D. dissertation on science teachers' understanding and teaching of complex systems at the University of Pennsylvania, USA.