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Continuing Professional Development for Teachers
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In the previous chapter the discussion focuses on why we should engage in continuing professional development. In this chapter we will explore some of the ways we might engage in continuing professional development. This will include discussion of formal approaches which require us being committed to planning the time and space referred to in the previous section. These valuable opportunities enable us to develop with others and share practice. However, we often forget there are many informal opportunities for professional development and the various approaches are also discussed in this chapter.

Many of us moving into teaching come from a professional or disciplinary background that we have gained expertise in, both in terms of our knowledge but also our experience. It is the knowledge, experience and passion that bring us to teaching with a desire to share this with others and engage them in our work. Whilst we have all chosen to move into higher education with a common vision of wanting to support and educate students we are ourselves a very diverse group in terms of our own experience, background and previous educational experiences we gained at undergraduate, postgraduate and even doctoral level. Despite this diversity we generally find becoming a teacher suddenly brings new challenges that perhaps we had not thought of or were not aware of. These include being faced with teaching large and small groups in a range of settings, the use of technology within and beyond the classroom, providing feedback to students on a range of assessments and activities, acting as a personal tutor, designing programmes and attending a range of meetings.

Within our previous lives we have taken a professional approach to our role and so this means taking responsible for our actions and regularly questioning these actions through reflection (be it conscious or unconscious) and seeking out new knowledge or skills to develop. This professional development for some of us is a requirement of our professional role such as those

who have nursing and midwifery qualifications, lawyers and those with chartered status with engineering or business organisations. For some of us there may be stated hours or credits and for some there may be specific activities that we should engage in but, it requires us maintaining a record of this activity. In today's rapidly changing world where knowledge continues to evolve and modes of access to knowledge are now becoming increasingly more varied continuing to develop and learn it is an essential part of everyday life. As you move through your career this will be key to your own personal development, as you increase confidence and competence in your role.

Continuing Professional Development

What do we mean by continuing professional development? Over the period of many years there has been some debate in the literature about the terms that might be used so continuing professional education was commonly used in the 1990's and tended to refer to the more formal approach of attending courses, conference and workshops (Eraut 1994). However continuing professional development has in recent times became a more popular term because it acknowledged that development also takes place in informal situations and in practice environments (Friedman & Phillips 2004). There has continued to be debate about the term with Webster-Wright (2009) suggesting that a further shift should take place with the term Authentic Professional Learning being suggested. For the purposes of this SEDA special we are going to use the term continuing professional development which encompasses activities that support your learning whether that be focused on skills, knowledge or experience and may be formal, informal, individual, collaborative and in any appropriate setting whether that is face-to-face or online (Webster-Wright 2009, Wilcox 2009).

This chapter will now explore some of the options available to undertake this activity with reference to how we may engage with these.

Formal development

Formal approaches provide perhaps a greater range of activities such as programmes, workshops and conferences, peer review, mentoring/coaching programmes and engaging in scholarly/research projects. These all have their merits but what is often common with these is the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with colleagues both within institutions and beyond as will be outlined below in some of the examples.

Programmes

It is now increasingly common for those of us moving into teaching today to engage in an award bearing academic programme such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice or Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to gain a recognised teaching qualification. These programmes provide us with knowledge and skills to support our role as a teacher. The programmes explore how our students might learn, the pedagogic approaches we can use to engage them, tools that we can use to assess them, services and approaches to supporting a diverse range of students, how to design effective programmes and many other areas that will enable us to meet the requirements of our role. The programmes can be delivered face to face, online or through a blended approach which is common today. There have been some frameworks developed over time to provide standards for teaching in higher education that programmes could use to underpin their development. One of the earliest of these in the UK was developed and launched by SEDA in 1993 but today the most commonly used one is that of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF) which is published by the Higher Education Academy on behalf of the sector (HEA 2011). This framework provides reference to the underpinning areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values that are central to our roles and are therefore useful not just to fulfil the programme criteria but also our continuing professional development beyond.

One of the aspects that many enjoy about these programmes is that they are delivered across institutions and so participants have an opportunity to hear about the experiences from colleagues in different disciplines and professions. This is always re-assuring in terms of

realising our challenges are often the same but there are also the benefits of hearing how others have approached these. It is also not uncommon that through these programmes colleagues start to collaborate on activities, network and share practice in areas such as for example simulation approaches and assessment practices.

Workshops

These may be held within institutions or at regional and national level. Workshops in institutions are often focused on specific needs such as the latest technology so staff can become familiar with this or they may focus on updating skills such as personal tutoring skills. However those that are held regionally and nationally may also provide some staff development activity but are more often focused on the initiatives that some institutions have found useful and wish to share with others such as Peer Assisted Learning or they focus on issues for the sector such as the new apprenticeship schemes. These are again an opportunity to learn from others but we can also develop external links and collaborations for future projects. Often as we attend these events we are thinking about how the information relates to our own context and experience and we are asking ourselves is this our experience? Have they done something different that we might find useful as approach? Is this something new that we would like to implement? Whatever the questions you ask yourself you start to reflect on how this may be relevant to you and your context.

Conferences

Conferences are an important activity for our professional development. They provide an opportunity to hear those leading in the field of pedagogy through key note plenary sessions and they offer multiple opportunities to hear what colleagues across the sector and internationally are doing to develop their practice and overcome challenges through providing/presenting workshops, short papers and poster presentations. We can all use this opportunity to share our work through one of the presentation options, develop our thinking through question and answer sessions and ensure that the good practice we have developed can benefit others. There are also the networking opportunities these offer at break out times

to have those informal conversations mentioned above. Presenting at a conference also often offers an opportunity to publish your work through conference proceedings or having prepared for the conference you now have your work in a format that can be submitted to a peer review journal. Like the workshops above attending conferences often leads to us asking ourselves similar questions. It may also lead to collaboration on projects where you have discovered a peer working on something similar.

Peer Supported Review

It is common today that all institutions have a scheme for some form of peer supported review of teaching. A more detailed account of the process of this is outlined in the next chapter however their format has changed over time to move away from just the classroom activity. Today the role of a teacher is multi-faceted and so peer supported review schemes take account of this and include the full range of activities such as face to face teaching, online teaching, design of programmes, assessment feedback and support for students. This enables you to have a review that suits your development at that time whether it be something you are confident and comfortable with and would like new ideas for or whether it is something that is new and you would like some feedback and confirmation around your actions is for you to choose. Whilst there are still some that see this as a tick box activity most have used this as a developmental opportunity and an opportunity to reflect on practice you are engaged in.

Mentoring/coaching programmes

Mentoring and Coaching schemes have become more common in institutions although these can be costly if external consultants are used and so are therefore often available for a limited number. However these have been useful in terms of supporting an excellent teacher develop further and explore how they might disseminate their practice more widely through applying for an individual National Teaching Fellowship in the UK context. The value of this has been recognised though for other situations and so some institutions have developed their own internal Teaching Fellow scheme. The focus of these might be supporting junior colleagues who wish to develop their practice further or who want to explore their next role and promotion.

Many are using mentorship schemes now with their professional development programmes leading to recognition as a Higher Education Academy Fellow for one of the categories in the UK. As with programmes these schemes are usually time limited and focus on a need but there are some mentoring relationships that go beyond and change into a peer mentoring situation because individuals feel they have learnt from each other and can provide support but also challenge each other's practice.

Scholarly/research projects.

We refer to publishing in our discussion about conferences and many of us do publish our work in a range of places including blogs, practitioner publications like SEDA's Educational Developments and in peer review journals. This scholarly activity requires us to reflect on our actions and share with others our successes but also reflect on where things may not have gone to plan and identify for others what we have learnt from this for future practice. This is a valuable approach to reflecting on practice and sharing this with others.

For many years pedagogic research was not seen as valuable and credible often because the focus was on small scale studies, qualitative data and often context specific. However, over time this has changed, the status of pedagogic research has risen. Whilst many studies remain small scale the rigour with which they have been undertaken and provision of a clear outline of the process has seen many value these studies and explore how they may relate to another context. There has been an increase in high quality peer review publications thus enabling staff to gain recognition through the research assessment activities that take place nationally every five or six years. There has of course also been an increase in large scale projects which have used a mixed methods approach and have collaboration across several institutions which has also raised the profile of educational research.

Informal development

Informal development is often undertaken as an individual activity through reading or undertaking a small study and through a conversation with colleagues. We often forget that this

is still a valuable contribution to our professional development. Many of look for literature when we wish to explore a topic in more detail either because we are looking for a solution to a problem or because we want to use a new approach. We will seek out peer review articles, anecdotal papers, blog posts and websites where we might be able to gather not only information on a topic but also other experiences. This helps us form a view about our next step and whether this approach will work in our context. Reading is of course undertaken in more formal approaches such as undertaking a professional or academic programme but this is often to achieve an assessment rather than explore an aspect of practice we might wish to change or develop. In the same way we may choose to undertake a small study around our practice which does again require reading but may also require some action such as a change in practice. This is not uncommon in teaching as new technologies appear we often want to try these in our classes to see if we can engage students more actively, enable them to collaborate or share information with our students in a different format. These studies are usually about our own practice and are small scale but are still valuable in terms of evidence-based practice.

Increasingly now there are also different forms of fellowship that individuals can undertake usually requiring some form of writing or portfolio that is then reviewed by peers in order that recognition of our work can be provided. The Higher Education Academy Fellowship which offer recognition at four different categories is one example and SEDA's Fellowship and Senior Fellowship are another. The key to all these is that you need to reflect upon your practice and this will be discussed later in this chapter but is also a theme through this special.

We have conversations with our colleagues about our work and success and challenges and often find through these conversations some learning we had not first recognised. Reading groups and journal clubs are another collaborative approach to sharing practice and ideas and sometimes this leads onto collaboration on a small-scale project.

These are important activities in our development but are sometimes forgotten in favour of more formal approaches that perhaps we believe are easier to demonstrate to others and

record particularly where there is a requirement to meet professional or regulatory body requirements.

These examples are not exhaustive but do demonstrate the multiple and rich approaches to continuing professional education we can use. However, the experiences alone are not sufficient to ensure learning from these. These experiences will only transform our learning if we actively engage with them and reflect on how they may enable us to change our practice (Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985).

Reflection and Professional development

As mentioned in the previous section/chapter it is the act of reflection on the development activities we undertake that enables us to transform our practice. Boud et al (1985) refer to reflection as *'…an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning'* (p19). This is another activity that supports our continuing professional development.

There are many models and frameworks to support individuals in reflection and it is beyond the scope of this special to outline the full range of these although examples are given. One example outlined here is particularly useful for reflecting on both individual learning and those that arise from interactions with others such as students in class, tutorials or online is that of Gibbs (1988) who offers his framework as a tool to support us in reflecting through a series of steps.
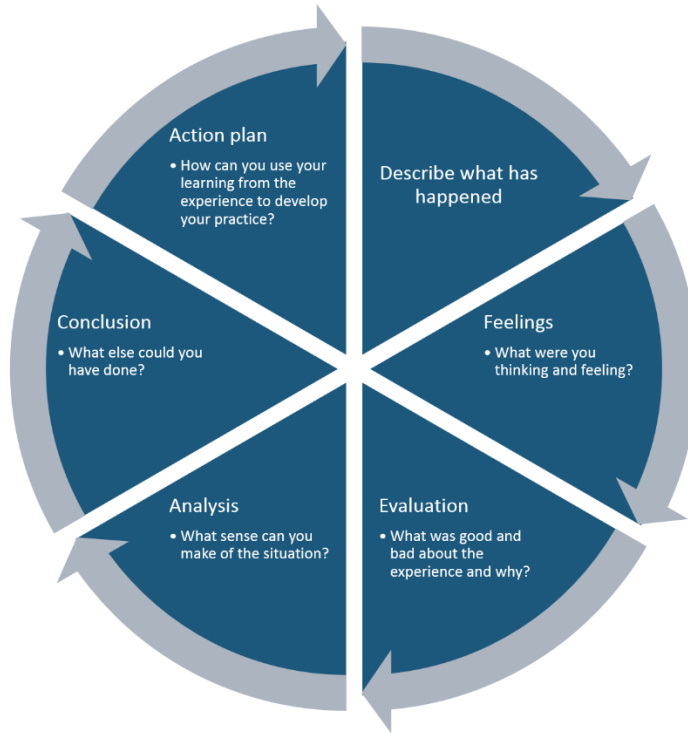
Describe what has happened

You need to provide a brief description of the situation or interaction you wish to explore in more detail.

Feelings

How did you feel about this? Was it positive, uncomfortable, stressful? Did it make you happy, angry, upset? Do you know how others involved feel?

Evaluation

What was good and bad about the experience and why? What is your perception of the impact of this on others?

Analysis

You need to make some sense of your thoughts so if it was good what was this due to? If it was bad, why did this happen and was it just one aspect that did not work?

Conclusion

Reflecting on your thoughts could you have done something differently and if you did do you think this might have made a difference?

Action plan

You need to outline your plan for the next time such a situation arises. This might mean changing your approach or you may have identified through this reflection that there is some continuing professional development you need. Make you plan and then carry out what is required.

Summary

This chapter has explored moving into teaching and the need for continuing professional development. The range of activities both formal and informal we can engage in for this have been outlined. Lastly there is discussion of the link to reflection on these activities so learning can be identified. One model to support the reflection has been outlined.

Other chapters explore some of the activities further and provide further details and examples of how reflection is central to effective continuing professional development practice. Other models to support reflection will also be offered as alternatives to Gibbs (1988).