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LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE CARDIFF CPD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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Abstract

The Cardiff Commitment Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme was a collaboration between Cardiff Council, Cardiff and Vale College and The Open University (OU). Initial contact with Cardiff Council's Cardiff Schools Service (Cardiff Council) began with discussions around supporting teacher CPD needs through a co-designed teacher focussed workshop. The Global Covid19 Pandemic resulted in this collaboration being extensively redesigned to reflect the need for teaching staff to support their learners via a blended online distance learning model. Cardiff and Vale College also agreed to join the initiative. This programme ran between November '20 and March '21 with a total of 12 workshops and a sample of 32 teachers and lecturers from across 23 institutions. Key benefits identified to participating staff included the professional development and upskilling opportunity, input into the cocreation of resources for peers and the wider sector and effecting change within their organisation and wider cluster through peer to peer approach.

Keywords:

Continuing professional development, blended learning, primary education, secondary education, further education, Covid19

Background and aims

There exist many recent international initiatives to support blended learning in primary, secondary, and further education (FE) sectors. For example, the European Maturity model for Blended Education provided criteria and instruments to assess the degree of maturity of blended education and innovation (Valkenburg et al., 2020). The blended learning essentials projects facilitated a free suite of online courses for the FE sector to promote effective practice and pedagogy in blended learning (Deepwell, Palmer, & Greig, 2019). While the Bringing Learning to Life project offered functional skills courses through the OpenLearn¹ online learning platform (Farrow, 2019). These needs have increased with the Covid19 pandemic where various initiatives have promoted the pivoting of blended learning environments (Maguire, Dale & Pauli, 2020; Marinoni, Van't Land & Jensen, 2020).

When thinking about blended learning initiatives in the Welsh context, where this research is contextualised, the Welsh Government has published several documents and guidance for schools and setting on learning and supporting distance learning (Welsh Government, 2020). The Learning Partnership Wales offers bespoke training for schools, clusters of schools and larger groups too during Covid19². Finally, The Digital 2030 Framework, focused on enhanced learning, was published in the summer of 2019 and updated in 2020 to include agreed Standards for digital skills (based on the FE and Work-based learning professional standards and aligned to Digital 2030) (Wells Government, 2019).

The Cardiff Commitment Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme was a collaboration between Cardiff Council, Cardiff and Vale College and The Open University (OU). Initial contact with Cardiff Council's Cardiff Schools Service (Cardiff Council) began with discussions around supporting teacher CPD needs through a co-designed teacher focussed workshop. The Global Covid19 Pandemic resulted in this collaboration being extensively redesigned to reflect the need for teaching staff to support their learners via a blended online distance learning model. Cardiff and Vale College also agreed to join the initiative. In collaboration with Cardiff Council and Cardiff and Vale College, the OU in Wales has developed and delivered a model consisting of agreed work streams that support teaching staff within schools and colleges in the online pivot and promote blended learning pathways.

The global Covid19 pandemic coupled with the imminent new curriculum for Wales³ posed challenges and opportunities to develop skills and approaches to distance teaching and learning pedagogy. Many teaching staff

¹ OpenLearn, <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

² The Learning Partnership Wales, <https://tlpwales.co.uk/ongoing-support-for-schools/>

³ Curriculum for Wales, <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

have adapted well in their approach to blended learning during the circumstances imposed in the past year, whilst others are still finding their way. The OU has been an established provider of high-quality higher education through flexible distance learning for over 50 years and is excited to share experiences, whilst learning alongside peers within schools and the FE sector. This collaboration recognised the demand on teaching staff across the education sector has never been more challenging, with many schools adapting to ever-changing circumstances. In collaboration, the OU has delivered a series of interactive online workshops, focused on pedagogy and effective learning design. Workshops were delivered to an invited cohort of teachers and lecturers identified by Cardiff Schools Service and Cardiff and Vale College (Phase 1). A series of workshops were then delivered (and recorded for others) to complement learning (Phase 2). Through the workshops and community created, insights were captured to potentially inform bilingual resources to support participants in peer learning within clusters and faculty. This programme ran between November '20 and March '21. The completion of this project has been successful in upskilling school and college staff in online teaching and blended learning pedagogy; in part to support preparation for the new curriculum in Wales. The programme has demonstrated key components of pedagogy such as reflection and cocreation, as well as to reflect the peer to peer aspect of the new curriculum. It has been an example of sharing practice and expertise across education levels and institutions.

Methodology

A cohort of 32 teachers and lecturers from across 23 institutions identified by Cardiff Schools Service and Cardiff and Vale College were invited to participate in the project (Phase 1 and Phase 2). From those 46.87% belonged to the primary level, 31.25% to secondary, 15.62% to FE level and 6.25% to Music Service and Regional Consortium. In terms of job roles, participants covered a varied spectrum of teachers (different years), lecturers, and leaders from various areas, with a predominance in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). For Phase 2 the invitation was extended through the Cardiff Schools Service, Cardiff and Vale College email distribution lists and other contacts in the education sector.

Alongside fellow Cardiff schoolteachers (across primary, secondary, and special schools) and lecturers from Cardiff and Vale College, participants were supported to actively participate in a series of workshops. These took the form of information sharing as well as discursive sessions online using the Microsoft Teams⁴ platform. The intention was for learning and skills developed through this collaboration to be shared with teachers and lecturers more widely. For that reason, Phase 2 workshops were recorded to be available in Hwb (Learning and teaching for Wales repository)⁵ including handouts (available in English and Welsh) to accompany each workshop recording summarising the key points. This sharing of practice was led by the programme partners in various ways and over time, but there was also a requirement for participating staff to consider peer to peer learning throughout their school, cluster, or faculty. During the process, participants were asked to use reflective practice and input into evaluation, and participation to shape elements together from the initial workshops in a participatory and cocreation approach (Jull & Graham, 2017). For mapping the workshops, the new curriculum for Wales was considered.

Phase 1 was organised by OU's Learning Design team (LDS), as a series of online workshops exploring pedagogy including activity design and assessment with the objectives of building knowledge and community through the series of workshops. While the first two workshops in Phase 1 were already set up, topics for the next workshops could be voted within the participants including the date and time. Organisers proposed 2 weeks in between workshops to give participants more time to put some things into practice, to encourage participants to reflect on the workshop and use a reflection journal to help their capacity-wise but without losing momentum (Bassot, 2016). Phase 2 was designed as stand-alone workshops and were delivered in a shorter space of time (one workshop or even two per week), topics for the workshops were proposed by experts from the Institute of Educational Technology (IET) at the OU. Input into the topics was explored from the several proposed options which were discussed and shaped together during Phase 1. For Phase 2 the participation was open to a wider audience of lecturers and teachers. For that purpose, Eventbrite events⁶ were created for each of the 6 workshops included in this phase, events information was provided both in English and Welsh. Table 1 summarises the workshops included in the programme and the attendance, in Phase 2 between parenthesis are the participants which were part of the sample for Phase 1. As it can be seen the participation decreased during the programme.

⁴ Microsoft Teams, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-ww/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

⁵ Hwb, <https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/>

⁶ Eventbrite, <https://www.eventbrite.com/>

Table 1: Workshops during the programme and attendance

Workshops	Date	Content	Attendance
Phase 1 (November '20 to January '21)			
Workshop 1	Thursday 5 Nov	Introduction	30 (93.75%)
Workshop 2	Thursday 12 Nov	Activity Design	22 (68.75%)
Workshop 3	Thursday 26 Nov	Assessment	18 (56.25%)
Workshop 4	Monday 14 Dec	From assessment to classroom	7 (21.87%)
Workshop 5	Wednesday 20 Jan	Collaborative activities	9 (28.12%)
Workshop 6	Wednesday 3 Feb	Reflection and strategy	9 (28.12%)
Phase 2 (February to March '21)			
Workshop 1	Tuesday 23 Feb	Supporting Inquiry learning design	6 (6) (18.75%)
Workshop 2	Thursday 4 March	Using & Creating OERs	8 (3) (9.37%)
Workshop 3	Tuesday 9 March	Feedback and Online Assessments	11 (2) (6.25%)
Workshop 4	Tuesday 16 March	Harnessing online communities & networks	1 (1) (3.12%)
Workshop 5	Friday 19 March	Designing Exceptional Learning Moments	2 (2) (6.25%)
Workshop 6	Tuesday, 23 March	Representing learners' online study journeys	1 (1) (3.12%)

The methodology design proposed combined the use of mixed methods (Terrell, 2012). A survey was used at the beginning of the programme to have a better understanding of the participants, their roles and teaching contexts, how Covid19 has impacted their teaching and the responses to this, their professional development experiences, and expected gain from the programme. This first survey had a response rate of 84.37%. Two further surveys were then used during, and at the end of the programme to support comparison to assess gaps and gains in confidence in designing and delivering blended learning, digital literacies and skills for online teaching, and confidence in supporting students in blended pathways, during Phase 1 and 2. The final survey of the programme has been designed to cover the experience of the programme as a whole and individual activities, the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved, and to identify expected changes to their practice. For Phase 1 the response rate was 21.87%, 15.62% for Phase 2, and 28.12% for the whole programme.

Several approaches to gathering qualitative information have been conducted in the middle and late stages, providing a richer understanding of the needs of the participants and their experiences and benefits drawn from the programme. This included the last workshop of Phase 1 as a reflective experience from the participants and a focus group with 9 (6 OU, 2 Cardiff Council and 1 Cardiff and Vale College) members from the programme partnership, to better understand the strength and difficulties of the project and move the partnership forwards.

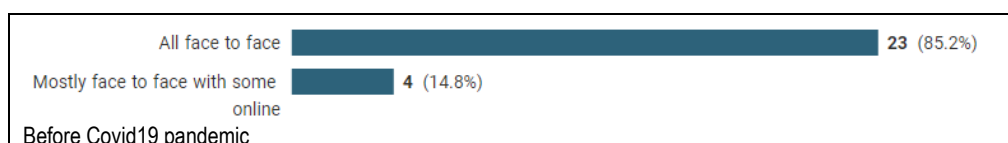
Results and discussion

Participants and partners perspectives are disclosed using the different sources of data included in the methodology.

The participants perspectives before the programme started

The experience of participants before Covid19 was predominantly face-to-face (Figure 1), while the experience of adjusting their teaching practice to blended learning was challenging. The pandemic has impacted participants teaching in different ways including students and families' engagement, the use of online platforms and online teaching methods, and the design of educational resources.

The expectations of participants to gain from the programme workshops included a better understanding of blended learning, professional development, gaining skills, sharing ideas and networking. Participants topics to develop during the programme included learning about online tools, step by step guides to create educational resources, and assessment and feedback methods.



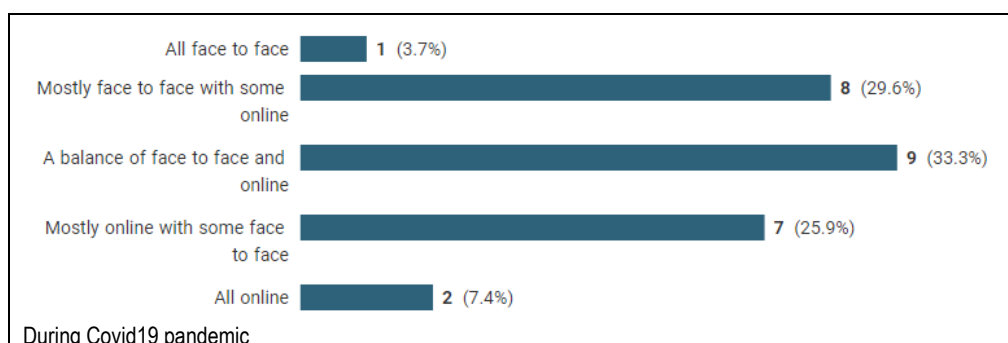


Figure 1. Before and during Covid19 pandemic teaching

The participants perspectives after each Phase and once the programme finished

Participants teaching practice during Phase 1 was used to create online educational resources and teaching in live sessions, increasing confidence. In that sense, participants indicated a better understanding of online activities and assessments, and practice with online tools after Phase 1. Participants engaged in working together, sharing experiences and collaborative ideas. In that sense mentoring has helped to support each other.

“We are doing everything pre-recorded at the moment, we are doing live check-ins and pre-recorded lessons, it feels a bit scary to do the live sessions, we have learnt about the flexibility and being open about what works and what doesn’t.” (Participant from reflective workshop)

“We acknowledged we can’t do everything at once, it takes time to introduce things and embed them into the organisation, it was good to see other people who agree you can’t do everything in one go. We liked the idea of collaboration, but we questioned how best to do that, because we are involved in so many tools.” (Participant from reflective workshop)

Phase 1 participants suggested future learning needs to be focused on building more flexible collaborative activities and assessments. Participants found valuable the use of Teams break out rooms, Padlet activities and pools to decide the content of the workshops. Participants found the workshops based on online assessment particularly useful, this indicates the interest in online assessment through the programme. Phase 2 participants understood the benefits of using Open Educational Resources (OERs) and open practices, the potential of using feedback in online assessment to increase engagement and updating the learning design to teaching needs. Participants wanted to learn more on how to employ citizen science and supporting student journeys online. Participants showed varied confidence with the tools introduced during the programme (see Table 2).

Table 2: Confidence with the use of tools

	No experience	Not confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
Phase 1 (n=7)					
Word cloud and interactive whiteboard			28.6%	14.3%	57.1%
Use of VLE discussions			28.6%	28.6%	42.9%
Group research and creation of a WIKI			42.9%	42.9%	14.3%
Infographics (CANVA or Piktochart)		14.3%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%
Mind mapping (MindMeister)		14.3%	28.6%	42.9%	14.3%
Adobe connect Online Rooms		14.3%	71.4%		14.3%
OpenLearn courses		14.3%	57.1%	14.3%	14.3%
Phase 2 (n=5)					
Citizen science websites and apps (iNaturalist)	40%	40%	20%		
Creating and sharing Open Educational Resources	20%	40%	40%		
Learning design including the use of tricky topics	20%	20%		60%	
Networking tools (Twitter, Facebook, forums)		20%	20%	40%	20%
Tools for supporting student journeys (Our Journey)	40%	20%		20%	20%

Participants agreed online learning is an appropriate way to overcome barriers during the pandemic and that they will make greater use of online learning because of taking part of the programme. They also agreed taking part in the CPD programme has improved their views on the quality of online learning (see Table 3). The main areas where

this has contributed to their professional development identified by participants were the development of activity design principles, a better understanding of distance learning and practical implementation of ideas in their classroom activities. In their future, participants indicated their desire to trial the content of the programme and share it with other colleagues. Participants acknowledged the CPD programme supports changing the approach to teaching in their department or institution and suggested the need for more support in blended learning training considering the appearance of the new curriculum.

Table 3: Attitude and values

Attitude and values (n=9)	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Online learning is the best way to overcome barriers during the pandemic		22.2%	22.2%	55.6%
I will make greater use of online learning because of taking the CPD programme		11.1%	33.3%	55.6%
Online learning can be of equal quality to face to face learning	33.3%	11.1%	44.4%	11.1%
Taking part in the CPD programme has improved my views on the quality of online learning		11.1%	55.6%	33.3%
I intend to share what I have learnt on the CPD programme with other colleagues		44.4%	44.4%	11.1%

The partners perspectives

Partners considered organising the programme from the logistical point of view was difficult to address and time-consuming, while the project has been inclusive and the response from participants involved in the workshops has been always positive. Partners believed engagement among participants was better after the first workshops. Partners credited that with the new curriculum there is an opportunity to do things differently and programme materials can impact the way the new curriculum is delivered.

"I have to say, it's been an absolute joy working on this project, because people did engage really well. And when we split them up into groups to work together, they always fed back really well and seem to enjoy them talking. I've been really pleased with the engagement. And of course, on top of everything that's happening at the moment, it's not easy to leave what you're doing come to a series of training." (Participant from focus group)

"I know they've got a lot out of it from people I've spoken to the went on it. Just having sometimes having that relationship to chat through problems with other people has a bigger impact when being shown how to use a tool that can help. I think it might not have had an impact in terms of using more technology in the classroom, but it might have an impact on their confidence in using things and sharing with others and communicating about technology for teaching and learning. Because I think a lot of the ones that went from our college, they were quite savvy with tech before." (Participant from focus group)

Partners considered teachers have limited time for their professional development, the new curriculum, should be more supportive and encourage collaboration across departments. The programme might have an impact on teachers' confidence in using tools and sharing with others and communicating about technology for teaching and learning. In that sense for those participants on the course, it has been invaluable to be able to learn good practice in the use of technology. Through the programme, there has been an improvement in the quality of educational resources produced. Partners were satisfied with the partnership during the project. It has followed a participatory approach to take decisions and for input, there has been a sense of commitment and enthusiasm considering the circumstances. It was positive to have all the sectors that share the same problematics involved in change. Finally, partners were engaged to participate in similar projects in the future.

Conclusions

Participation in the programme has been affected by several factors, teachers returned to the classroom part way through this programme and there was a second lockdown after the Christmas holidays. It was less flexible with accessing online workshops during school hours. Promotional time for Phase 2 varied depending on when organisers received some information and the capacity of partners to pass on the information. The impact of the project at this point is still limited to the reported experiences. It is expected meaningful impact will come from

teachers and lecturers' practices in collaboration and sharing of knowledge, behaviours already identified during the programme. The resources produced during the programme such as Phase 2 workshops are expected to be available through the Hwb repository including handouts in Welsh and English, Microsoft Teams shared space will remain open for mentors to potentiate its use and the Welsh version of the OU course "Teaching Online" in OpenLearn is available⁷.

As participants have reported, the programme has facilitated more confidence in designing and delivering blended learning and in supporting their students studying in that environment, the programme has extended the resources for digital literacies and skills for online teaching. In that sense as identified by the partners, the programme has been a professional development opportunity, including input into the cocreation of resources for peers and the wider sector. With the new curriculum for Wales, projects such as the Cardiff Commitment CPD programme promote effecting change within organisations and wider cluster through peer to peer approach and a chance to share practice, learn from one another and collectively work towards addressing the needs of teaching staff across the school system, FE and higher education.

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⁷ Take your teaching online, <https://www.open.ac.uk/wales/en/news/new-course-help-teaching-and-lecturing-online>