SAT: No Teacher is an Island: The implementation of open practices for improving Continuing Professional Development. (Jen Kendall)

Cloud created by:

Jen Ken
3 January 2015

⭐ **Favourite**   1928 views   **2 favourites**

Extra content

Abstract

'No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent…' (John Donne 1624)

Without meaningful professional networks, a classroom can feel rather like an island to a teacher. Perhaps these teacher-islands comprise a school 'archipelago', but the fact remains that many teachers face barriers to connecting with others professionally and because of this would not be characterised as 'engaged learners' (Pedder & Opfer 2013) themselves. In a contrast to other professional roles, Hargreaves (1996) suggests that a teacher making reference to research in a staffroom conversation would be regarded as 'showing off'. So developing a 'community of practice' (Wenger & Snyder 2000) is not as easy within a school as one might expect.

A large body of research about the effectiveness of collaborative working highlights the benefit of participation in networks outside of the 'internal structures and cultures' (Pedder & Opfer 2013) of a school. A large number of teachers want to engage with others, as the popularity of professional discussion forums on the Times Educational Supplement website reveals. Networking practices between schools were promoted heavily by government during the implementation of the Primary Strategy in 2004, however issues of power relationships, privacy, staff turnover and time demands led to many of these networks not functioning as well as they could have(Moore & Kelly 2009).

Issues such as cost, time commitments and school priorities have led to Continuing Professional Development often being delivered in the form of day-long courses that are frequently selected *for* teachers based on school priorities linked to national initiatives, rather

Search

🔍

Log in ▾   Sign up

Username:

Password:

Forgotten password

Tags

➕ **Add a tag**

In Cloudscapes

☁ OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' Online Conference 2015

than led by teachers themselves (Ridley 2011). This fragmented approach is in contrast to the collaborative style of professional development that is shown to be most effective (Pedder & Opfer 2012).

This presentation seeks to promote an approach that puts collaboration at its centre and encourages the creation of a network of professionals supporting each other. Using an open platform to discuss an artefact associated with teaching, such as a lesson plan or a particular resource can enable asynchronous communication from teachers who each bring a different view to the discussion. The inherent privacy, low cost, accessibility and lack of hierarchy on an open platform removes many of the barriers to effective collaboration that have been identified in school clusters previously (Moore & Kelly 2009). This approach could transform school staff into engaged learners who have instant access to a wealth of experience in the form of colleagues working in other contexts. The teacher is no longer an island but becomes part of a 'continent', a community of practice.

_____

DFE (2013) 'Press release: New advice to help schools set performance-related pay' *Gov.uk* Published:16 April 2013 Last updated:29 April 2013 available at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-to-help-schools-set-performance-related-pay .

Hargreaves, D(1996) Teaching as a reasearch-based profession:possibilities and prospects (The Teacher Training Agency Lecture 1996). Reprinted in Hammersley, M. (ed) (2007) *Educational Research and Evidence-based Practice*, Milton Keynes, Open University/Sage.

Moore, T.A. & Kelly, M.P. (2009) 'Networks as Power Bases for School Improvement'. In Preedy, M., Bennett, N. and Wise, C. (2012) 'Educational Leadership: Context, Strategy and Collaboration.' London, Sage.

Opfer, V, & Pedder, D (2010) 'Benefits, status and effectiveness of Continuous Professional Development for teachers in England',*Curriculum Journal*, 21, 4, pp. 413-431, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 January 2015.

Pedder, D. & Opfer, D. (2013) 'Professional learning orientations: patterns of dissonance and alignment between teachers' values and practices'. *Research Papers in Education* 28:5, 539-570, DOI: 10.1080/02671522.2012.706632 Published online: 21 Aug 2012. Available at: http://www.tandfonline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1080/02671522.2012.706632 Accessed 15/11/14.

Ridley, J. M (2011) 'Research Associate Full report: Teachers' continuing professional development within two clusters of small rural primary schools Autumn 2011'. *National College for School Leadership*. Available at http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/12137/1/download?id=156377&filename=teachers-cpd-within-two-clusters-of-small-rural-primary-schools.pdf (Accessed 08/11/14).

The Open University (2014) 'The Networked Practitioner', H818 *Study Guide* [Online], Available at: https://learn2.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=203172 .

Wenger, E, & Snyder, W (2000) 'Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier', *Harvard Business Review*, 78, 1, pp. 139-145, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, (Accessed 16/11/14).

Jen Ken

Add to a Cloudscape

Improve this cloud

+ Add a tag

+ Add extra content

+ Add embedded content

+ Add link

+ Add reference

To preview or read afterwards, here is a transcript of my presentation scheduled for 15.45 on Saturday 7th February 2015

Presentation Transcript

Jen Kendall for The Open University H818 online conference.

Saturday 7th February 2015

Slide One : Title and Accessibility

No Teacher is an Island: The Implementation of Open Practices for Improving Continuing Professional Development. A transcript of this presentation is available at: http://cloudworks.ac.uk/cloud/view/8876

As the title suggests, this presentation focuses on the theme of the implementation of open practices for the continuing professional development of teachers.

I am an assistant headteacher at a large primary school in outer London. Throughout my career, I have actively sought opportunities for continuing professional development, however, a comment made by one of my team at the beginning of the year made me think about CPD from a different perspective.

Slide Two: Identifying the problem.

As the speech bubble coming from the image of the car shows, the teacher said, "I don't know where I've put my MOT certificate… I'll just say I'll be getting the bus to the training centre. I won't bother doing any courses anyway".

At all schools in the borough I work in, you must present proof of your car insurance and MOT in order to drive yourself to the training centre to attend courses. This barrier to CPD is one of many but the comment highlighted the perceived low value of continuing professional development to this individual. After speaking to others, it was clear this view was widely held. Very few had attended courses that they found useful and most commented that speaking to colleagues from other schools was the only reason they attended any courses.

Slide Three: The Problem

An image of an island.

Slide Four: No man is an island.

The island pictured on this slide represents the problem: The teacher who lacks professional dialogue with colleagues has become isolated.

The quote on this slide of an island scene, by John Donne, reads, 'No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent'. As teachers, we are part of a vast education system. With the technology we have today, we are better placed now to connect with others than at any other time in history. **However**, as a busy teacher, **my** classroom feels like an island. I feel isolated from others. The professional conversations I would like to have are being pushed to the bottom of my 'To Do' list because I have so many other things to do. If I

could connect to others, perhaps I wouldn't feel like this. Personally, I have combatted this by signing up to study with the Open University, but not everyone want to choose this option.

Slide Five: Why do teachers need to connect with others?

My research into this area included studies by Opfer and Pedder in 2010 and Thurston in 2008. As the quote on the slide says, 'The link between professional collaboration and improved pupil attainment has been noted in a range of contexts'.

Slide Six: The barriers to effective CPD.

Following discussions with teachers and headteachers involved with my primary cluster, and wider reading, three key issues were identified that create barriers to CPD being effective.

1)   It is often decided on by the headteacher and linked to whole school development priorities rather than individual need/interests.

You may argue that school development priorities should drive CPD, but how many of us put 100% effort into something that is imposed upon us?

2)   It often comprises of physical meetings, which are not accessible to all.

As the MOT certificate example illustrates, not everyone is willing or able to travel. Besides which, studies have shown that the collaboration element is often more valuable than the content of the course. The location and timings for the majority of training I have experienced have not lent themselves to networking. When a course ends, my priority is more likely to be beating the rush onto the motorway than exchanging email addresses with the person I have been sat next to. (The speed at which a room clears would suggest that I am not alone in this either!)

3) It often has to be booked well in advance, so participants must wait for training.

If a teacher asks for help with teaching phonics, they need that help now. Or at least soon. Waiting three months for a training session is wasting three months of teaching time.

Slide Five: The problem of the school 'archipelago'.

This slide shows an image of an archipelago, a group of islands.

You might think that a community of teachers would have a lot to share with each other, but in my own experience in a number of schools I have found that this simply isn't the case. I think of it as the school 'archipelago'. In the quote shown on the slide, Hargreaves, in a lecture to the Teacher Training Agency in 1996, said that referring to research in a staffroom conversation would almost certainly be regarded as 'showing off'. Help given from colleague to colleague is more likely, in my experience, to be linked to school practices rather than pedagogy. In many schools there simply isn't the culture of professional dialogue.

Last year, before I joined the school where I work, it was given a 'Requires Improvement' rating by Ofsted. This, for anyone not in teaching, is the official equivalent of a public telling off. As a result of this, four teachers from my school were paired with four teachers at another local school that is rated as 'good'. These four teachers are to coach our teachers and help them be…better! Hooray! Professional relationships and conversations about the practice of teaching! However, this is a little difficult to do regularly when you don't work in the same place.

Slide Eight: The Idea.

Just like the image on this slide of a slightly flooded pathway between two islands, my idea, to create a resource to enable teachers to connect with each other, is not yet complete.

In order to allow staff in my local network to communicate, I wanted to create an open online area for sharing thoughts, ideas and research while evaluating items, such as policies or lesson plans, posted to the site. This is in its development stages, but in the spirit of openness I would invite you to have a look at it. www.partofthecontinent.weebly.com.

Slide Nine: The website.

This is a screen shot of the home page of the website. It invites teachers to join in the conversation and become, 'part of the continent'.

Slide Ten: So why bother?

I have just said that many teachers I have worked with do not seem to be interested in CPD. However, a recent survey carried out by the Association of Teachers and Lectures and published in the Guardian on 27th January 2015 revealed that, when asked what would improve their teaching, 70% of new and trainee teachers called for more time to reflect on their practice with colleagues. My own discussions with staff reflect this view among many more experienced teachers.

Slide Eleven: The benefits of collaboration.

The slide repeats the image of a path connecting islands and includes the information from a study by Thurston et al in 2008 that, in a study of CPD focused on group work for children in Scottish primary schools, collaboration between participants and the networks established during the CPD was found to be a key factor that changed the practice of teachers.

Slide Twelve: The possibilities.

The image shows a network of laptop computers around the world. An open online platform could allow sharing and discussion world wide. In this case, it seems much more likely that it will remain small scale and run for the benefit of my local schools. Either way, the flexibility of a tool that can be used asynchronously means that many of the barriers mentioned earlier can be overcome. And a community can develop.

Slide Thirteen: Privacy.

A key factor in helping teachers to get involved is the privacy issue. This is something that I have received a number of comments about from those involved in the H818 community. Why wouldn't teachers want to identify themselves? When speaking to teachers about being involved in this project as it has developed, they have wanted my assurance that their comments will not be attributed to them. There is rather a culture of fear in schools that appearing to be less than perfect will harm you during performance management. Criteria for progression through pay bands are strict and identifying a weakness in an area that you are supposed to have knowledge of would perhaps prevent teachers from getting involved. As noted in the Cloudworks comment for the abstract outlining this presentation, it can be difficult to admit that you do not know something when in a group of your peers.

The slide contains an image of the website and a speech bubble with text representing a summary of some of the views I have heard over the course of my development of this project.

'The ideas on here help me consider my own point of view. I don't have to reveal my 'true' identity so I can say what I really think'.

Slide Fourteen: Referring to research isn't 'showing off'.

In the background of this slide we can see a screen shot from the comments page of the website. We can see that responding to a comment with a link to research becomes a quick and easy possibility. Perhaps teachers may feel more comfortable to do this from behind their computer than they would face-to-face in the staffroom. The piloting of this project will reveal whether this really is the case. We will have to wait and see!

Slide Sixteen: The key message.

The island image is back as a reminder of where we have come from. As the slide says: Don't be an island, be part of the continent.

Thank you for listening, I'm happy to take any questions.

References

Marsh, S (2015) 'Five top reasons people become teachers – and why they quit' The Guardian Online published Tuesday 27January 2015 0700GMT

Opfer, V, & Pedder, D (2010) 'Benefits, status and effectiveness of Continuous Professional Development for teachers in England',Curriculum Journal, 21, 4, pp. 413-431, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 4 January 2015.

Thurston, A, Christie, D, Howe, C, Tolmie, A, & Topping, K (2008) 'Effects of continuing professional development on group work practices in Scottish primary schools', Journal Of In-Service Education, 34, 3, pp. 263-282, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 4 January 2015.

[Jen Ken](#)
13:06 on 7 February 2015 (Edited 13:07 on 7 February 2015)

+ Add extra content

Embedded Content

Poster Presentation

[Poster Presentation](#)
added by [Jen Ken](#)

Contribute

Discussion (11)   Links (0)   Academic References (0)

M M
8:16pm 13 January 2015 (*Edited 4:49pm 17 January 2015*) Permalink

Jen

This is very close to my own topic of using video to enhance CPD and share openly across online spaces.

I LOVE, LOVE, LOVE your poster as it is incredibly clear what your presentation will be about. I will be avidly watcheinglistening to this (all being well) as it would be fantastic to go back to my Senior Leadership Teamwith ideas other than my own. I especially empathise with the 'to-do' list!

Really looking forward to this!
Ps would I have your permission to use quotations of the comments you left on my padlet in my presentation?

Jen Ken
1:04pm 18 January 2015 Permalink

Hi Marese,

Thank you for your comments - it was a real boost when I was feeling the post TMA submission fear!

Feel free to use anything that I've posted - I found your Padlet so helpful in the development of my own resource, though I have been a lot slower in getting it organised than you have!

Jen

M M
8:43pm 18 January 2015 Permalink

Thanks for the permission Jen! Really looking forward to this. Would you see the sharing via an open platform to be completey public; something like TES, or more exclusive like an online forum for use within a school staff?

My sharing of classroom footage is envisaged as an online group of like-minded individuals but not from within the same school; so open from the point of view that it is more open than normal, but also not completely public as I wanted to trial it with the H818 community and would never be keen to make it completely open due to privacy concerns.

Strangers dont frequent my classroom at any stage and this is almost what I loved about this case study; strangers (from H818) helped!!!

Samantha Marks
7:22pm 26 January 2015 Permalink

Hi Jen. There are a few themes appearing across the conference and CPD is one of them. The thought of being an island resonates with me as a practitioner. I guess I am more an adult educator than a teacher, but I do work alone, so I know how important my professional networks are in helping me develop my own practice, but in also influencing others. One of the dfficulties for most though is time. I look forward to seeing how you address the motivational parts of getting teachers to collaborate. I presume that the idea is this is an across school based network rather than within. On your poster there was an interesting bit about not knowing the real life identity of people. This links with our understanding of degrees of openness, but my experience is that you get better collaboration and feedback when you know people more. How you hope to develop the community 'bonding' elements of group developments will be interesting.

Rachel O'Connor
6:52pm 28 January 2015 Permalink

Hi Jen. I really liked your artefact and am interested to know more about what your presentation reveals. I can totally understand the comments about CPD on offer often being led by they priorities of the school. I do not work in a school but in my organisation there is a similar train of thought at times. Some training I recently wanted to go on was denied as the organisation wanted me to take an internal course instead, even though it was clear it would not have offered the same skills development for me which I would be reinvesting in the organisation.
I am keen to know if you have found any downsides to your idea of this collaborative learning? Your abstract sounds really positive but does this kind of openness always work? I know one barrier for me in an open arena to discuss something is feeling a bit silly if you don't understand the discussions. Occasionally on some of my OU modules I know I have not always understood discussions that go on in the forums or at tutorials. It is not always easy to admit that and ask people to explain themselves further. Maybe the relative anonymity of your website would help get over this.
Looking forward to hearing more

Jen Ken
10:51am 31 January 2015 (*Edited 6:52pm 31 January 2015*) Permalink

Thanks for your comments,

Marese, I like the idea that the forum will be completely public but you'd be unlikely to stumble across it as a teacher in say, Canada, looking for CPD. I would probably need to informally 'invite' people to come and use it. Initally, this will support the links in my local cluster of schools - I have 2 schools interested as well as my own. I like the idea of people being anonymous as, particularly nowadays, admitting you are struggling with something you 'should' know about is like asking to be torn to pieces during performance management. "As you are paid as an acomplished / expert teacher, you should be able to ...." etc etc Schools would be nervous of their staff making them look bad if they were

publically seen to be inadequate in some regard. By being anonymous, the post could be any teacher in any school and the value is really in the reader's own reflection on the comments than a direct taking of particular advice. I love the way you used video clips, but as you say, making this truely public is still a step too far.

Sam - I definitely see what you mean about better collaboration with people you know, but as I might have covered in the paragraph above, it's currently a bit tricky to admit to being anything less that a totally perfect finised article as a teacher in fear of how you are judged, both within the school and by external bodies including Ofsted. I can't imagine any teacher I know getting involved without the security of anonymity.

Rachel - I think this links to your point. I have definitley been Googing away during discussions to find out what people are on about. MOOC you say? Ah yes... a....(come on Google!!!!).... It's reassuring in a way to hear that the narrow view on CPD isn't limited to schools -

Jen

Jen Ken
6:54pm 31 January 2015 Permalink

Marese, Rachel, Sam,

Would I have your permission to use your comments on here? I haven't quite worked out what I need but I think views relating to privacy and admitting to needing help will be included in my presentation somewhere :)

Jen x

Dave Martin
1:14pm 2 February 2015 Permalink

Hi Jen I would agree with you that teachers ought to be able to choose their own professional development needs as well as following institutionally set ones. I wonder if you've seen this use of Twitter by history teachers to share ideas? This link would take you to an example.https://twitter.com/hashtag/histedchat?src=hash

I'll be interested in hearing why you have opted for contributors being anonymous too.

Rachel O'Connor
3:24pm 6 February 2015 Permalink

So sorry I didnt see your comment sooner Jen - yes, you certainly have my permission to use anything I have said in your work.
In preparation for your presentation I have just been having a look back over your items posted in OpenStudio and I can really see the journey you have been on through H818 with this project. You posted many resources on OS that really back up your choice of topic and support the need for more ways of creating communities of practice like your website. It was great to see how your artefact has been developed after feedback from fellow students. I see in your last comment that hopefully your fellow teachers would be

using it soon. I am sure it will be great to see your artefact being of benefit to others and 'real-time' users will really give you the chance to see how well it works and how you can develop it going forward. Both your open studio and cloudworks sharing and your chance for fellow teachers to use your artefact really exemplifies the point of this course and how beneficial and open way of working can be.

Well done. Looking forward to tomorrow

Jen Ken
1:08pm 7 February 2015 Permalink

Thanks Dave and Rachel - you have helped me to fine-tune what I want to cover later today.

Really looking forward to hearing the presentations!

Jen

Dr Simon Ball
3:42pm 9 February 2015 Permalink

Here are the comments and questions from your live presentation at the conference:

- Is CPD compulsory for teachers as it is healthcare professionals and if not should it be?
- CPD is also essential for many other professions like chartered surveyors, accountants etc. so many hours a year - like a flying hours for a pilot
- When I taught in FE I was surprised at the lack of general interaction between tutors. Time often stated as a barrier although I do think that at times there was a lack of interest in development and a bit of 'I'll do it my way, thanks'
- Our tutor groups meets for half an hour a week before class - even that helps
- If given a choice, would the staff that most need development think they don't need any?
- should be part of appraisals/talent mangemnt and development?
- wonder if local school could be a problem - I've found there can be local competition between local schools...but schools from other counties are far more accessible and acceptable
- Are teachers 'permitted' to have an online presence? I know I have observed in the past rules that don't permit tutors to have Twitter/Facebook accounts and share openly. Now, that's a real barrier to development...
- Bayne did some good stuff about online identity
- have you shared it with any colleagues during the development?
- Have you shared your plans with your school management and if so what are their reactions?
- do teachers who want CPD seek their own CPD or just languish in stale practice?
- Have you found any downsides or negative consequences of your approach to CPD using the site?

Contribute to the discussion

Please log in to post a comment. Register here if you haven't signed up yet.

---

cloudengine   Preferred language   English