

Chapter 21

Multi-Faceted Professional Development Models Designed to Enhance Teaching and Learning within Universities

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter we advocate the reconceptualisation of pedagogical focused professional development to a more flexible and systematic approach and present two technology-oriented models. This chapter is of interest to a range of educational stakeholders including university professional developers, academics, leaders, students, and support staff. Two mixed method case studies of students' and academics' experiences of online and blended teaching and learning informed the design of the models. These multi-faceted models are designed to promote effective pedagogically-focused professional development, the scholarship of teaching and learning, social and professional networking, and supportive university leadership all aimed at improving teaching and learning. We articulate how the integration of technology can facilitate all of these important activities. It is anticipated that, if implemented, these models will result in a more pedagogically- and techno- efficacious academy; more satisfied and successful graduates; more informed, involved, and trusted leaders; greater sustainability for programmes; and the enhancement of institutional reputation.

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INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this chapter are to 1) present descriptions of effective university teaching within ICT-facilitated learning environments drawn from the research within the higher education context; 2) articulate the lessons learned about teaching and learning (T&L) from two case studies involving students' and academics' perceptions of T&L within online and blended modes, and 3) present and advocate for new conceptualisations of pedagogical and ICT-facilitated professional development for all academics aimed at enhancing university teaching and learning.

The research that supports this chapter is reported in two mixed method case studies where we present students', perspectives about learning experiences and the instructors', and administrator's perceptions about the instructional design, teaching, and assessment within predominantly online courses. The first case involves an international undergraduate cohort of learners studying an Australian degree within the discipline of Commerce and encompasses issues of facilitating learning for students within a blended mode. The second case reports on online postgraduate (Master and Doctoral) students studying within the education discipline at a Canadian university. The similarities and differences between the students' perceptions of their learning experiences and of instructor T&L capacities within ICT-mediated learning environments are explored.

In order to enhance T&L in universities, educational stakeholders must first understand what constitutes effective teaching practice that supports student learning outcomes and the contextual factors influencing academics' capacity and willingness to engage with the 'quality T&L agenda' in order to create effective professional development opportunities. To this end this chapter is structured to outline research findings about effective teaching in the literature review presented in the 'background'. The case studies in the section 'Technology for University Teach-

ing and Learning' describe how technology was used to facilitate T&L, and while not necessarily representing exemplars, they do provide insights into real classrooms and pragmatic orientation of contemporary students and instructors.

BACKGROUND

Teaching and learning in universities is a complex topic and involves quite different stakeholders with differing perspectives. For example, university academics are content or discipline specialists but who also need to be able to teach their students effectively. Academics' focus is on effective teaching, but is also consumed by institutional expectations such as research, service, and/or leadership. Academics are very important as they select the curriculum, design the learning experiences, and assess students' learning. Students are also important as they are the other half of the educational equation, as recipients of the learning experiences. Leaders are influential as they have the opportunity, and indeed the responsibility, to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and promote professional development that can enhance teaching and learning. This section introduces key aspects of T&L at universities: an overview of the impact of technology on universities, descriptions of effective pedagogies, the importance of structuring for active learning in the design of courses, and the importance of assessment for effective learning. The chapter does not explore curriculum or content as it is well understood that all academics are experts in their field and therefore should have an excellent command of their discipline upon which they can draw for teaching purposes. We explore the 'how' and 'why' of effective university teaching and propose models for professional development designed to enhance academics' capacity to teach within their disciplines, particularly as it relates to contemporary ICT-rich learning landscapes.

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