Challenges for continuing professional learning: Singapore’s trainers

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Purpose of the paper

- Describe the challenges for the Continuing Education and Training (CET) sector
- To explore implications and possibilities
Some questions for discussion

What Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) experiences have you had that you considered useful?

Given that one size does not fit all, what models of CPL might be helpful?
Purpose of professional learning?

Professionalise the industry

What does it mean to be a professional trainer?

Meeting learner needs

Meeting industry needs

Quality of learning

Quality of training
Professional Learning?

Professional Development?

Context
- Situated context
- Political economy

What is the relationship?
Continuing Education Training (CET) in Singapore

Industry Skills Councils

Private providers (N=498)

Workforce Development Agency (WDA)
Private providers

Permanent employees

WDA
Quality assurance, registration of providers, curriculum accreditation

Adjunct or associate trainers / assessors / curriculum developers
Project research questions:
1. What beliefs do WSQ trainers have about learning and teaching and how do these relate to their practice?
2. In what ways does practitioner research facilitate reflective practice?
3. What contextual factors mediate beliefs and practice?
Who are our trainers?
Highly qualified
Limited qualifications related to teaching and learning

To what extent do workbooks encourage deep learning?
What cognitive levels do we expect of our learners?
What assists learners apply what they learn in class?

How do we encourage engagement and participation?
Trainer intent for participating in professional learning activities

- Currency
- Managing pedagogical processes
- Developing theoretical knowledge and linking it with practice

Keeping up to date with industry knowledge

- Are those who do not participate in group work actually learning?
- How can I help the participant learn better?
- How do I adapt the methods and structure of content to meet and manage learners’ learning styles?

I’m more interested in some theories to explain how things can be more effective and I think theories are important it’s a good way to ground explanations I don’t know where I can find all this
Access to Professional Learning

Full time trainers can access courses, seminars, conferences, meetings

I hardly have much opportunity to interact with my peers (adjunct trainer)

Any activities I will just participate ... 'cause otherwise we just conduct, okay, finished the assessment, pass that, and then a new class again, so we never have the time to sit down and think about this (adjunct trainer)
Challenges

It was always too long or getting caught up in certain slides and then other slides are just passed over, and then it was managing the learners. There was this frustration about how come after this delivery they didn’t learn anything?

The challenge for me is how can I conduct, impart the knowledge such that they can learn and then at the same time I can finish on time ... what are the things that I can take out and what the things that I should emphasise, highlight and at the same time help them to learn?
• What facilitates transfer of learning?

• How to distinguish passive learning from applied learning?

• How to develop good alignment between training and assessment?

• How to write curriculum so the learning is at the centre?

• Relationships between case studies and levels of cognition
What excites me is to be able to **impart** the knowledge to the people

I would see myself as a **facilitator**; not so much in terms of giving knowledge and information but it’s more **sharing of experiences**
Trainers value ...

- Telling of stories
- Introducing learners to their industry
- Engaging learners
- Discussion
- Group work
I can add but I cannot delete. I can add a lot of information related to that particular topic, but I cannot say ‘I don’t want to talk about it.

We better stick close to whatever; if not there’ll be a lot of to-ing and fro-ing of validation or signing off of the documents.

For WSQ, again politically correct, I would not change anything. [Laughs] No, I think -- yeah, I mean my experience, my encounter is that I think WDA is quite strict on whatever we - this is a perception - of whatever we do, so I think it is to stick as closely as possible to the curriculum.
Challenges for professional learning

• Structure of the sector

• Interpretation of policy

• Provider expertise

• Opportunities to develop and share pedagogical knowledge
Where to from here?

- A re-examination of systems and policy that inadvertently encourage teacher centred approaches;
- Providers to develop values and systems that encourage risk taking, the sharing of learning;
- Ongoing research for research informed practice and policy.

- Deepen understandings of theoretical frameworks;
- Meaningful, authentic, professional learning activities;
- The use of artefacts of and from learning settings (e.g. videos of sessions, samples of work, lesson plans) to trigger critical dialogue and reflection.
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