

Critical Participatory Action Research to Improve VET Practice

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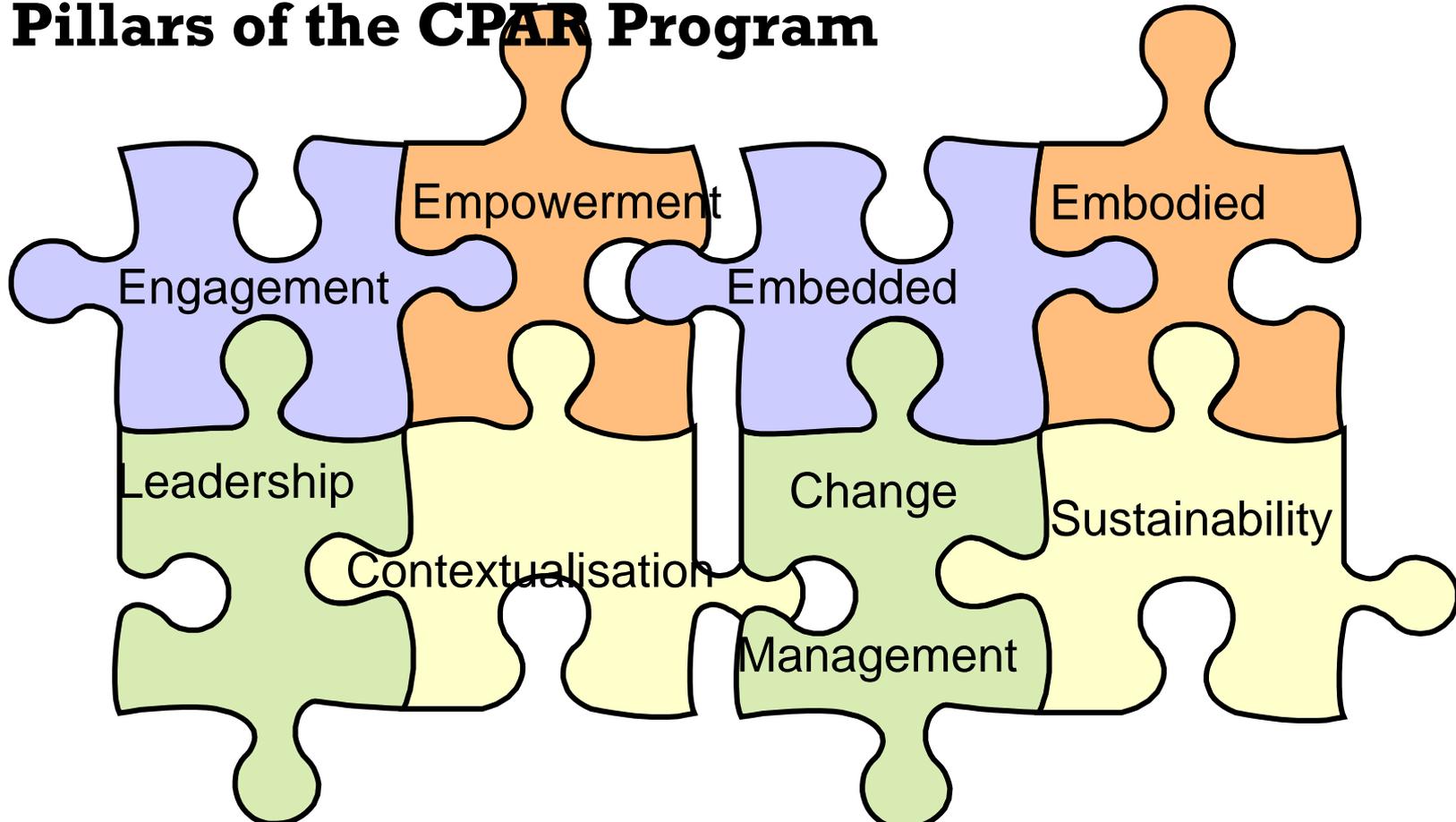
The VET landscape through a practice theory lens

- Has multifaceted ecologies of practice that coexist (Wilkinson et al. 2014).
- Multiple stakeholders
- Particular traditions (by vocation, industry, region etc)
- Distinct practice architectures
- Expectations:
 - Provide high-quality education and training to diverse learner groups.
 - Constantly appraise their practices to accommodate emerging changes in work and economy
- Major constraint:
 - Limited resources and time
- Challenge for VET practitioners - balance quality and expertise

Case example of renewal, appraisal and change

Work integrated project using Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR)

Pillars of the CPAR Program



Project goal: to improve VET teachers' practice through CPAR

Objectives

- Develop two 'action research pods'
- Design, implement and appraise CPAR process
- Develop guidelines and tools

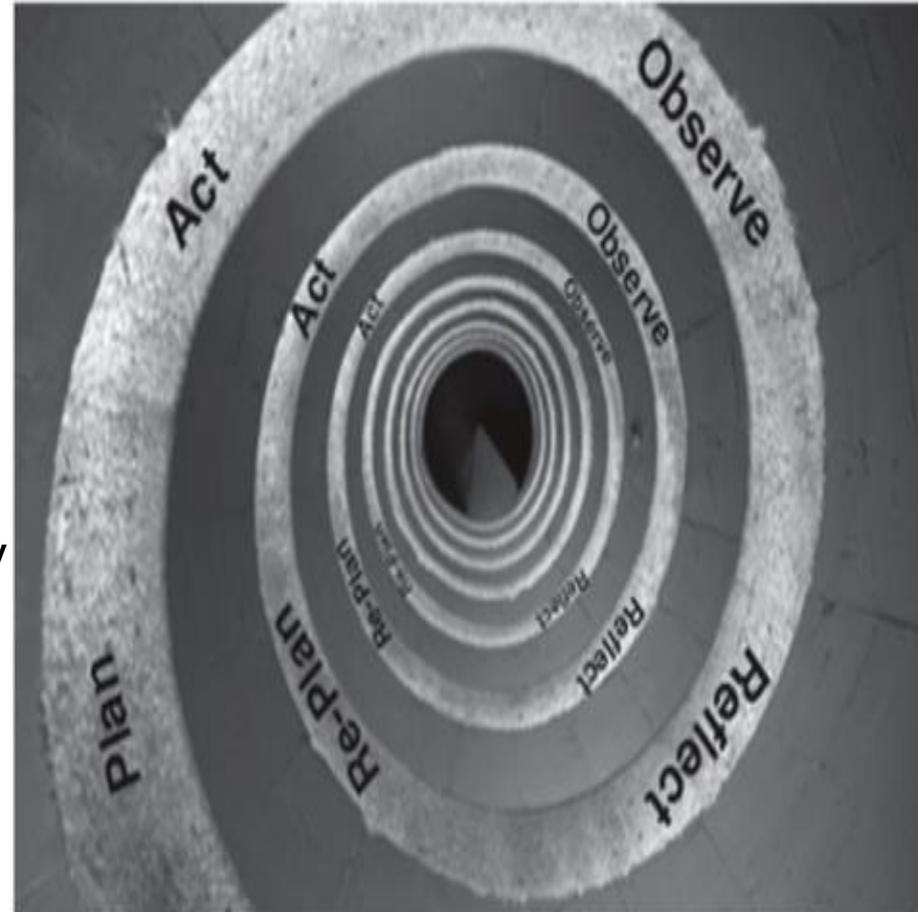
Theoretical Framework

- Practice theory
- Practice architecture
- Social constructivism

- Transformational learning – critical research aims to transform practice
- CPAR as the praxis (within rule following, creativity and innovation)

Process

- “*Critical Participatory Action Research*” (CPAR) - participants change a social practice (e.g., VET teaching) by changing what stakeholders *think* and *say*, what they *do*, and how they *relate* to others.



CPAR

- CPAR is a practice changing practice – a social practice that is enmeshed with the local sites.
- The process and findings are made public
- However, it should also be:
 - Manageable
 - Site-based
 - Meaningful and informative
- CPAR is not research that you do on top of your work – it is an integral part of work

What CPAR involves

- Focus is not so much on following the steps, but more so on strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, understandings of practices and situations in which they practice.
- A social process where participants engage with others to remake the practice.
- Understanding about how things are done in a particular site in order to influence the thinking and sayings, the doings and relatings.

TAFE Queensland Project

- 27 teachers commenced in 2014
- 9 presented at the OctoberVET in 2015
- Project themes:
 - Streamlining and simplifying the interdisciplinary process
 - Using iTunes U to promote student engagement
 - Workplace Learning and Assessment for Veterinary Nursing Students
 - Improving student outcomes through the effective use of blended learning
 - Education for sustainability with pre-service educators and its impact on the field of early childhood education and care
 - Blended delivery in workplace
 - Integrated evaluation of pedagogic practices
 - Transforming VET Practices – Embracing multi modal delivery
 - “TELLing it and SEEing it via iTunesU “

TELLing it and SEEing it via iTunes U: From substitution to redefinition – Annette Winch

- Would iPads and iTunesU App act as a catalyst to build educator capability and redefine learning processes or merely support continuation of existing processes?
- Literature review of pedagogical approaches and internal data;
- Pre and post-test surveys of the six educator participants
- Five educators piloted content creation and delivered two units from AMEP programs
- Course completion data was collected from: students' iTunes U coursework; the educator's learning journals; informal conversations with students and educators; a student engagement survey and the educator surveys.



- The goal was to measure the shift from use of iPads and iTunes U courses from **Substitution** for current delivery strategies to one of **Augmentation**, through to **Modification** and finally **Redefinition** (SAMR) where the technology enabled the creation of new delivery strategies.
- The **ADDIE** (analyse, design, develop, implement and evaluate) instructional design problem solving framework (Schlegel 1995), was used during the project. It enabled the project plan to have clear goals and tasks to meet the overall objectives within the given timeframes.

Findings

- Survey results indicated that iTunesU and iPads provided a sustainable, productive and inclusive delivery model that improved the digital literacy of students:
- A drop from 80% to 40% using the iPads merely as a ‘substitution’ device, with a 10% increase in ‘augmentation’;
- 15% increase in modifications to delivery, indicating significant change in delivery tasks;
- Where there was no indication of using technology to redefine delivery at the *start* of study, the post-study data indicates a five per cent shift to redefine delivery and include *new* tasks;
- **iTunes U stimulated task redesign and iPad use became ‘transformational’.**
- iTunes U required educators to reflect on current material and practice, learn underpinning theories of copyright, instructional design content development, App and activities selection as well as the technical aspects to navigate their iTunes U course suited to the abilities and context of their own contemporary learning environment.

Educator Journal Entries

- *Students able to work at their own pace, self-directed exploring ...i was available to spend more one on one time with the Students who needed the additional support. Students also requested access to the online learning material (iTunes U Course) outside of class time. They were able to do this by downloading on their own devices, enabling access 24/7.*
- *It was an effort! Some days it did not feel worth it. However when I watched Students creating mind-maps or answering quizzes online I felt excited to see their progress. I'm convinced that they need digital literacy alongside English language development in order to work in Australia. I enjoyed working alongside Students as they progressed through the course – seeing their own satisfaction as they completed each task.*

Outcomes

Trial findings were shared widely and educators were encouraged to reuse preloaded iTunesU courses, with many requesting training. This approach may further transform delivery approaches.

The project may be replicated in AMEP and SEE programs in other regions, leading to state-wide consistency of TELLs programs.

The iTunesU model may apply to other programs within TAFE Queensland, including delivery to international students.

Future studies could explore processes for low-cost digital collaboration across TAFE Queensland Regions.

CPAR Researcher Reflections

Winch observed that running 'educational delivery pilots' supported by a 'Participatory Action Research' framework adds legitimacy and validation for implementing new delivery practices that enhance and build capability. It gives participants the opportunity and support to be "learning to do it by doing it" (Freire 1982).

Our traditional approach to building educator capability was to separate the training into discrete domains or disciplines. These domains of pedagogy and andragogy were delivered separately to those of technical and digital systems training. Changing the approach to one of reflective action and self-identification, assisted in providing the 'just in time' skills development that aligned educational practice with technical skills development. This strategy of 'learning by doing' gave meaning and purpose for their skills development and provided for a much richer context in which to learn and put these new skills into practice. (Winch).

Key observations

- Teachers most valued the learning and developed confidence
- They felt empowered - had ownership in conceptualising, designing and implementing strategies
- Approaches were contextualised, embedded and embodied within their area of practice to meet local needs
- Collaborative communities drew on the strengths and leadership from within
- Change was incremental – some small, some large and some integrated innovation (without recourse)

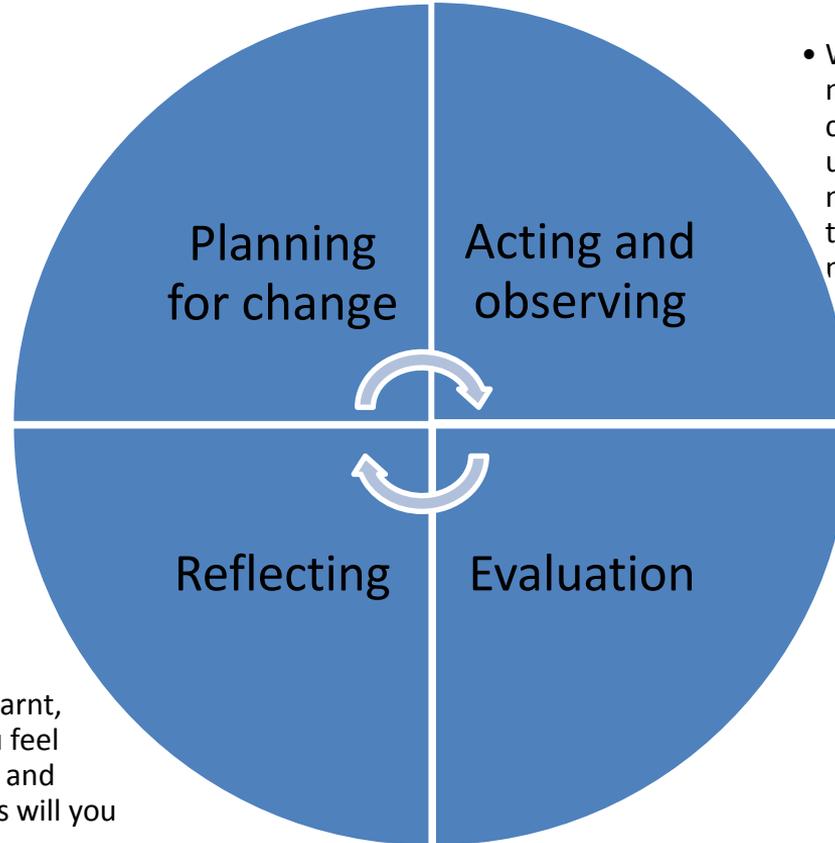
Challenges

- Time management; on-going considerations for emerging changes and priorities; role changes

Way forward

- Thoroughness in data collection to verify rigour in the process of action research
- Clear measures for the outcomes
- More detailed monitoring of the projects at each phase
- Data storage to inform future projects and other initiatives
- Frequent sharing/reporting will keep the projects alive and staff up to date
- Reflective diaries to analyse personal development and change in thinking and practice
- Project outcomes to be celebrated and recognised as part of professional capacity building of staff.

- How things are done currently, how did the practice come about (history), what are the consequences – the good and not so good outcomes.
- What are the limitations?
- Agree on a common understanding of the situation, what needs changing and work out a way forward.



- What actions are needed for the change, the understandings that need to change and the conditions needed for change?

- What you learnt, how did you feel about these and what actions will you take.

- Evaluate the plan to ensure the limitations are being addressed and that the new way of acting will not lead to other undesirable consequences.