Introduction: A Continuous Professional Learning and Development (CPLD) Framework for Online Teaching

Richard Walker and Dianne Forbes

Abstract One of the key outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic has been to move fully online teaching from a niche activity to the mainstream within higher education. This has required a radical rethinking of how higher education institutions support their faculty to develop their online teaching practice. In this introductory chapter, we discuss the reasons why continuing professional learning and development (CPLD) has never been more important in helping instructors who are new to online teaching to develop the requisite competencies and strategies to work effectively in this domain, as well as to support experienced teachers in refreshing and extending their online teaching practice. We acknowledge that there is no universally accepted approach to CPLD for online teaching and that diverse approaches are needed to address wide-ranging development requirements, such as staff capabilities, pedagogies and course design needs related to associated disciplinary and institutional practices. We present a CPLD model to capture these diverse sources of support, which forms the organising framework for this book. This model provides an overview of the different sources of learning development that are available to online instructors – both within and outside the teaching institution – and how they are interrelated and interconnected as part of a wider ecology of CPLD support to staff. We explain how these different sources of support may be combined to support personalised learning development pathways in online teaching practice.

This book presents a collection of cultural and organisational perspectives from around the world on how higher education instructors have been supported to teach effectively online. We issued an open call for expressions of interest in writing

R. Walker (✉)
University of York, Heslington, UK
e-mail: richard.walker@york.ac.uk

D. Forbes
University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand
e-mail: dianne.forbes@waikato.ac.nz

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chapters on this theme in May 2020 via our professional networks and national learning technology associations, encouraging contributions from university, college and polytechnic staff engaged in the development of online teaching practice. We purposely did not target contributions from particular countries and hoped for a diverse range of national and organisational perspectives. Expressions of interest were received from authors in June 2020, with the drafting of chapters taking place between March and September 2021 and final changes made by May 2022 in response to feedback from the reviewers of this book.

This has resulted in an edited volume of 14 chapter contributions by authors from nine different countries situated within Asia, North America, South Asia, Pacific and Western Europe, reflecting on their approaches to online teaching development. Each chapter addresses the central question of the book, namely, what continuing professional learning and development (CPLD) opportunities do higher education instructors require to help them to develop their online teaching practice.

The use of the term CPLD is intentional, as it represents an inclusive label to describe training and development opportunities for online teachers. It combines the continuing professional development (CPD) term favoured in the United Kingdom with the professional learning development (PLD) focus which is more commonly referenced in New Zealand. CPLD captures the need for the sustained development and learning of all professionals engaged in online teaching, from novices to experienced professionals. CPLD as a term therefore reflects an ongoing development process, which is adaptable to a range of contexts for individuals at different stages of their online teaching careers. CPLD is also inclusive in terms of the development themes that it covers, addressing pedagogy and instructional design approaches, as well as the technical knowledge and digital skills that have been the traditional focus of development activities for online teachers.

In this introductory chapter, we will discuss why CPLD has never been more important for online instructors working within higher education and will provide an overview of the different sources of learning development that are available to them – both within and outside the teaching institution – and how they are interrelated and interconnected as part of a wider ecology of CPLD support to staff. We present a CPLD model to capture these diverse sources of support, which forms the organising framework for this book.

1 Covid-19 and the Mainstreaming of Online Teaching Provision

This book was conceived as a project at a time when international education was severely disrupted by the Covid-19 emergency (Marginson, 2020). In this context, higher education institutions around the world were challenged to move away from traditional face-to-face delivery and rapidly develop alternative flexible teaching and pastoral support services during the emergency remote teaching phase of 2020–2021. These circumstances required a radical rethinking about alternative and equitable learning, teaching and assessment opportunities for learners (Walker,

2021) – particularly for those students remotely located from the university campus (Rapanta et al., 2020).

One of the key outcomes of the pandemic has been to move fully online teaching from a niche activity to the mainstream within higher education, with institutions rapidly scaling up their fully online learning provision to students (Misirli & Ergulec, 2021). This has had a knock-on impact on teaching practice, with online teaching skills now required for all staff, rather than just for a minority of specialist online instructors. For classroom teachers who lack the first-hand experience of studying and teaching online, the shock of this rapid adjustment can be profound (Bennett & Marsh, 2002). As Donnelly and O'Rourke (2007) have observed, the challenges of managing an online environment go way beyond technical considerations to encompass social and pedagogical responsibilities and require confidence-building through the adoption of revised teaching strategies. McWilliam (2005) has described this process as involving the unlearning of those campus-based teaching practices with physically present students, with staff encouraged instead to draw on the affordances of technology to do things differently for online learners.

The pandemic has therefore accelerated changes in teaching practice that were arguably already underway over the past decade with the rapid growth of online learning (Leary et al., 2020) and has challenged conceptions about what effective online teaching with technology should look like. In this context, the case for universal CPLD is urgent – helping faculty who are new to online teaching to develop the requisite competencies and strategies to work effectively in this domain, as well as to support experienced teachers in refreshing and extending their online teaching practice.

2 The Distinctive Challenges of Online Teaching

The transition to online teaching has commonly been presented as one requiring a mastery of digital tools and their effective application in teaching encounters with students (Tschida et al., 2016). This implies a level of technical proficiency but underplays the importance of the considered application of technological pedagogical content knowledge (Koehler et al., 2013) to help inform the design and organisation of learning environments for students (Chikasanda et al., 2013). Teacher development in this respect is crucial, as the replication of campus-based teaching methods is unlikely to lead to an enhanced or effective learning experience (Salmon, 2011). Online learners require different sources of support and infrastructure to physically present students, as well as contrasting methods to help them engage with individual and collaborative study tasks. The social dimension of online learning is a key consideration in engagement strategies, touching on how teachers encourage students to project themselves socially and affectively within a learning community (Rourke et al., 1999). A reconceptualisation of teaching methods is therefore needed to determine what works and why (Baran & Correia, 2014), and this, in turn, may influence the approaches to teaching that are used (Trigwell et al., 1994; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996).

The rethinking of teaching methods will have implications for an instructor's pedagogical role within an online environment (Coppola et al., 2001; Redmond, 2011), the skills and competencies that they will need, and the teaching persona that they will adopt in this new environment. The transition to online teaching will also touch on student-centred design, determining the activities that students will engage in to drive their learning, incorporating opportunities for social interactions and peer-led learning. It will undoubtedly require learning management and facilitation skills, with teacher presence reflected in synchronous encounters with students (e.g. through video conferencing) as well as asynchronous feedback and discussion activities.

3 CPLD for Online Teaching

Given the complex needs that we have discussed, it comes as no surprise to note that there is no universally accepted approach to CPLD for online teaching. One size does not fit all. Diverse approaches are needed to address wide-ranging development requirements, such as staff capabilities, pedagogies and course design needs related to associated disciplinary and institutional practices.

Development requirements may be associated with a range of factors, not least the level of experience that an individual has acquired in online teaching. In this respect, CPLD interventions have been traditionally designed around a deficit training model, supporting staff with no prior experience of teaching or learning online to make the transition to virtual teaching – getting them up to a level of basic competence. In this book, we contend that CPLD should be relevant to staff across the full career spectrum, from novice to experienced online practitioners. This means offering support beyond the initial transition from classroom to online teaching, challenging staff conceptions about instructional design, delivery approaches and student engagement modes with online learning activities and assessment. Effective CPLD should therefore continue to confront individual conceptions of teaching practice with the reality of online teaching, provoking changes in conceptual thinking (Ho, 2000) as part of an ongoing reflective process.

We explore how CPLD provision can address these multiple needs and how different sources of support can be effectively combined to provide a coherent development experience for staff. This is not always straightforward, given the obstacles that may exist in institutions. A common organisational challenge that has been noted in the literature is the technological-pedagogical division of support within institutions (Donnelly & O'Rourke, 2007). This may manifest itself in a number of ways, such as when IT trainers lead workshops on the digital tool-set without reference to online teaching strategies. Other academic development units may be deemed responsible for guiding staff on the teaching side of working online. Such a fragmented approach to CPLD provision can hinder the development of online educators, where explicit links between pedagogical considerations and the selection and use of the underpinning technology are not made in training and support interventions.

3.1 A Multidimensional, Multi-level Model of CPLD

As a corrective to this fragmented support picture, we present a multidimensional, multi-level model for CPLD, which is the organising structure for the chapters in this book. This builds on Baran and Correia's (2014) professional development framework for online teaching, which focuses on three key levels of the organisation, community and teaching. We develop this further to demonstrate the interconnected nature of CPLD both within and outside the institution. Our *CPLD Ecological Support Model for Online Teaching* (Fig. 1) addresses the myriad opportunities for reflection on teaching practice using technology, available at inter-institutional, institutional level, programme (teams-based) levels and through individual reflection and change, available to professionals across the full career spectrum from novices to experienced practitioners. Our model recognises the porous boundaries

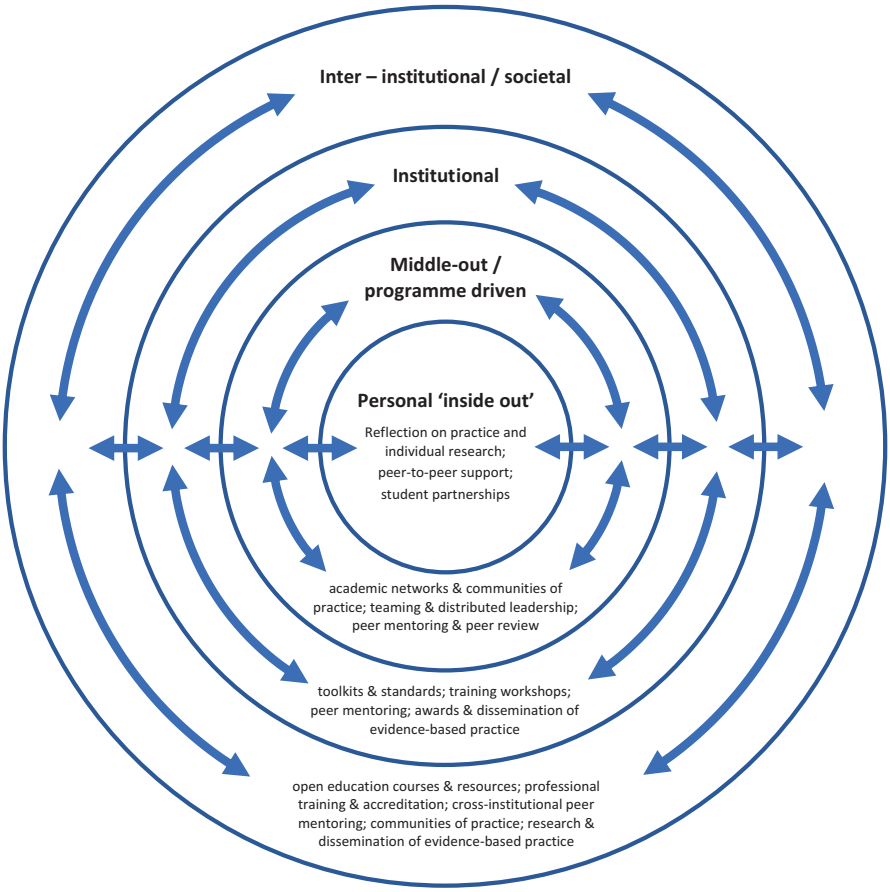

Fig. 1 CPLD ecological support model for online teaching

between development initiatives at all of these different levels, with learning and development insights being exchanged in multiple ways: from 'outside-in', drawing on societal and inter-institutional activities to inform individual professional development, to 'inside-out', reflecting on personal practice and research, sharing lessons learned within and beyond the institution to a wider peer community. These CPLD dimensions are described as follows.

3.1.1 Inter-institutional/Societal CPLD

This 'external' dimension captures the sources of CPLD support that engage individuals across organisational, national and cultural boundaries. Open educational initiatives represent one such medium for cross-boundary CPLD and communities of practice to emerge and are the focus of four chapters in this volume. Farrell et al.'s chapter (Professional Learning for Open Online Educators: The #Openteach Story) on #Openteach describes how a professional development programme for open online educators project was launched, sharing evidenced-based practice on design for online teaching within the Irish tertiary sector. Experiencing online learning from a student perspective, the open course provided teachers with empathetic insights into the student experience of online learning through authentic and structured activity. As a feature of the #Openteach approach, Farrell et al. point to the scope for community building and sharing across an academic community.

This is a theme also addressed by Dell et al. and Kennedy et al. in their respective accounts of MOOC courses. They highlight the scope of open education courses to model and promote social and collaborative learning through technology, extending beyond their institutions to engage a global community of educators. Both chapters reflect on the scope of MOOCs to offer participants the opportunity to learn both from the course designers and from each other, in courses that support peer dialogue and knowledge building. Keeping with the open education theme, DeWaard and Chavhan reflect on CPLD developments from the perspective of cross-cultural collaboration between professionals situated in Canada and India. This is realised through a UNESCO peer mentoring framework, bringing together professionals from different cultural and organisational contexts to work together and explore fresh perspectives on teaching practice as part of an open education initiative.

International professional accreditation schemes represent another form of cross-boundary support for online educators. Cochrane and Jenkins discuss the merits of the Certified Membership of the Association for Learning Technology (CMALT) accreditation programme from their combined UK and Australian perspectives. They explore how CMALT maps digital skills to learning outcomes, encouraging educators to engage in reflective practice supported through active collaboration within a learning community, with a requirement to maintain and update a living portfolio of digital practice.

3.1.2 Institutional CPLD

The institutional dimension represents a top-down perspective of CPLD provision from within an organisation, looking at the staff training, dissemination and mentoring schemes that are provided to equip staff with the skills, inspiration and technical support to move their teaching online and develop it further.

May and Denton describe an institutional framework for professional development in New Zealand, delivered through the Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (ADDIE) model of guided curriculum (re)development. This represents an adaptation of the original ADDIE framework (Branch, 2009) to support staff with the ongoing review of learning design approaches during crisis situations, ensuring that staff have the pedagogical understanding to teach effectively online.

Houston et al. reflect on the design of an institutional toolkit for online delivery within their UK institution, drawing on an alternative ABC curriculum design framework, which was originally developed by University College London's Digital Education team to drive online learning design (Young & Perovic, 2018). Through this approach, they describe how instructional design has been presented as an essential part of academic practice at Glasgow Caledonian University, with the ABC framework offering a way of modelling best practice by effectively blending a range of different learning types and digital tools.

Ngai et al. explore the interrelationship between programme level (departmental) and top-down staff development initiatives in supporting the transition to emergency remote teaching in Hong Kong. This has been supported in their institution through an institutional adaptation of the 'Technology Pedagogical Content Knowledge' (TPACK) framework (Koehler et al., 2013) and informed by a needs-based assessment of staff online teaching requirements, but enhanced at the departmental level by attention to personal and attitudinal barriers that staff face in supporting students and managing expectations about the online learning experience.

3.1.3 Middle-Out Programme-Driven CPLD

This dimension acknowledges the collective enterprise of identifying and promoting development according to the needs of the teaching programme, with initiatives developed within programme teams and then being shared more widely with colleagues across the institution.

Vallis et al. highlight the value of social and dialogical interactions at the programme level as a driver for change in reconceptualising approaches to online learning. They report on the different interdisciplinary perspectives that have informed a co-design instructional process, providing opportunities for professional learning. Academics as 'connected learners' is a theme also explored by Zeivots et al. in their chapter (Share Sessions: A Solution to Cross-Disciplinary Academic Professional Learning and Development In Higher Education) on 'Share Sessions', focusing on informal conversations between members of different disciplines within an

Australian business school, which discussed innovative online teaching practices. They describe how these sessions have fostered cross-disciplinary learning – highlighting the value of academic networks and communities of practice. Harper and Holme also discuss the role of professional learning communities as networks or communities of practice. In their chapter (Informal, Grassroots Online Professional Learning: The Experiences of Teacher Educators), they present a framework for collaboration and critical engagement, which was designed to challenge established campus-based conceptions of teaching practice, as well as to support Scottish school teachers in their transition to online course delivery.

Roloff Rothman et al. focus on the role of distributed leadership and teaming at the programme level as a way of driving staff development. They describe how this approach can achieve staff buy-in and engagement, which, in turn, provides the momentum for changes in instructional practice. Recognising that leadership can be spread across multiple leaders, structures and situations, they describe how their peer-led sessions at a Japanese university have been effective in increasing a base level of expert knowledge, with trainees passing that knowledge on to others within programme teams across the institution.

3.1.4 Personal 'Inside-Out' Experiences of CPLD

This personal dimension addresses the individual initiatives that drive continuous professional development and learning, such as reflection on practice and self-managed learning activities to inform enhancements to online teaching activities.

Philip, in her chapter (Pathways to Creative Learning and Teaching Online: An Ecological Model), focuses on the challenge of learning to teach creatively online – highlighting the importance of active self-organised CPLD delivered through micro-level engagements, through peer-to-peer led CPLD activities, risk-taking and research, which she distils into seven CPLD principles to drive creativity. These self-organised activities are presented as an effective alternative to 'passive attendance at standardised CPLD sessions' and part of a wider ecological model for developing creative teaching online.

Drawing on their own personal development journey, Lafferty and Roberts describe the lived experience of their transition to online teaching within their UK university, navigating the different layers of CPLD networking and sources of support during the emergency remote teaching phase. In their chapter (From Physical to Virtual: Reflections on the Move from the Lecture Hall to the Digital Classroom), they highlight their shifting identity from classroom to online teachers and also the changing identities of the students they were supporting as part of this lived experience. They reflect on the requirements for CPLD provision to be effective, addressing well-being and the ability of academics to assess and reflect on their own needs, as well as to support creative teaching practice.

4 Summary

The key message from all of the contributions to this book is that CPLD support for online instructors is multi-faceted – drawing on formal and informal learning opportunities from within the teaching institution and beyond that are accessed flexibly by higher education practitioners. There is no 'one way' of offering support that can meet the needs of every instructor and no definitive CPLD programme that can address the full range of development priorities. Individual requirements will vary over time and in response to evolving teaching contexts and practices. Consequently, it is the responsibility of instructors to actively manage their own learning development over the course of their career. By drawing on the different levels of support available both within and outside their institution, individuals can drive their own personalised learning development in online teaching practice, moving beyond digital skills proficiency to the development of a holistic understanding of learner needs and suitable course delivery strategies to suit their teaching context. Furthermore, by sharing practice they can also influence the professional development and learning of their peers. The chapters present different approaches to achieving these twin aims, offering a range of ideas and tools that may support professional development at both ends of the online teaching spectrum, from novices to experienced practitioners.

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