

Building Educator Capacity through Evidence-Based Professional Development Strategies

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Words of the Day

- Systematic
- Intentional
- Aligned

Educator Professional Development

- Student learning requires effective teaching.
- Effective professional development advances educators' skills and confidence.

Need for Effective Professional Development of Educators

- Professional development for educators needs improvement; it is one of the most pressing and challenging issues in education today (Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014).
- Clark and Floreio Ruane (2001) call for a fundamental redesign to educator professional development.
- The most common approaches to educator professional development are characterized as “one-shot, fix-‘em-up experiences” (Fleischer & Fox, 2003, p. 259). These approaches are considered ineffective; they are fragmented, lack educator-centeredness, and are decontextualized (Penuel et al., 2007).
- A collective dialogue among faculty is needed to change practice (Anderson et al., 2011). There is value in the conversation...
(**Note:** Hold this thought.)

Considerations for an “Inside-Out” Approach to PD

Painting a Picture:

- Educators often **feel isolated in their practice**, which is detrimental to their continued learning and development (Lieberman & Mace, 2010; Niesz, 2007).
- Despite being well intended, educators typically view most professional development as fragmented, disconnected, and irrelevant to their practices (Lieberman & Mace, 2010).
- Educators’ knowledge arises from their problems of practice, which are detailed and authentic (Lieberman & Mace, 2010).
- Educators **thrive in collaborative environments** (Hunzicker, 2010).
- Focus professional development efforts should be advancing practice to **improve learner outcomes** (Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014).
- **Educator-led professional development** informs improved instructional practices (Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014).

Effective (Reform-Based) Educator Professional Development

- Characteristics:
 - Extended duration
 - Active learning; educator-centered; collaborative
 - Pedagogical knowledge
 - Content knowledge
 - Authentic context
 - Use of data
 - Connections to broader organizational and systemic efforts

See: Smith & Schmitt-McQuitty, 2013:

<http://ucanr.edu/repositoryfiles/ca6701p47-99930.pdf>

Communities of Practice (CoPs)

- Communities of Practice (CoPs) represent a mode of professional development whereby educators are working **with** other educators, rather than experts working **on** educators (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).
- Educators **learn in practice** (by doing), **through meaning** (learning is intentional and authentic), and **through participation** with others (social engagement) and **through identity development** (learning and changing who they are as practitioners) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).
- It is a process whereby **practice is made public**; it is **data driven**; and it is **contextualized** (Lieberman & Mace, 2010).
- Considered to be a **transformative approach** to educator professional development (Lieberman & Mace, 2010).

CoPs have “become a worldwide focus” for educator PD (Lieberman & Mace, 2010, p. 79).

Communities of Practice

“...groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4).

Theoretical underpinnings: **constructivism; situated learning; and reflective practice.**

Communities of Practice

- **Individuals enter into CoPs on the periphery;** through time, the level and complexity of their interactions increases and they move more to the center. Referred to as **legitimate peripheral participation** (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).
- CoPs provide a forum to **mentor novices** (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).
- Structure offers educators continued **motivation, acknowledgment, and support** for self-development efforts (Mycue 2000).

How to Develop a CoP

Domain

- What topics and issues are we going to address?
- Connection to the organization's strategy?

Community

- Who are members? What roles will they play?
- How and how often will we meet?
- Community norms and ground rules?

Practice

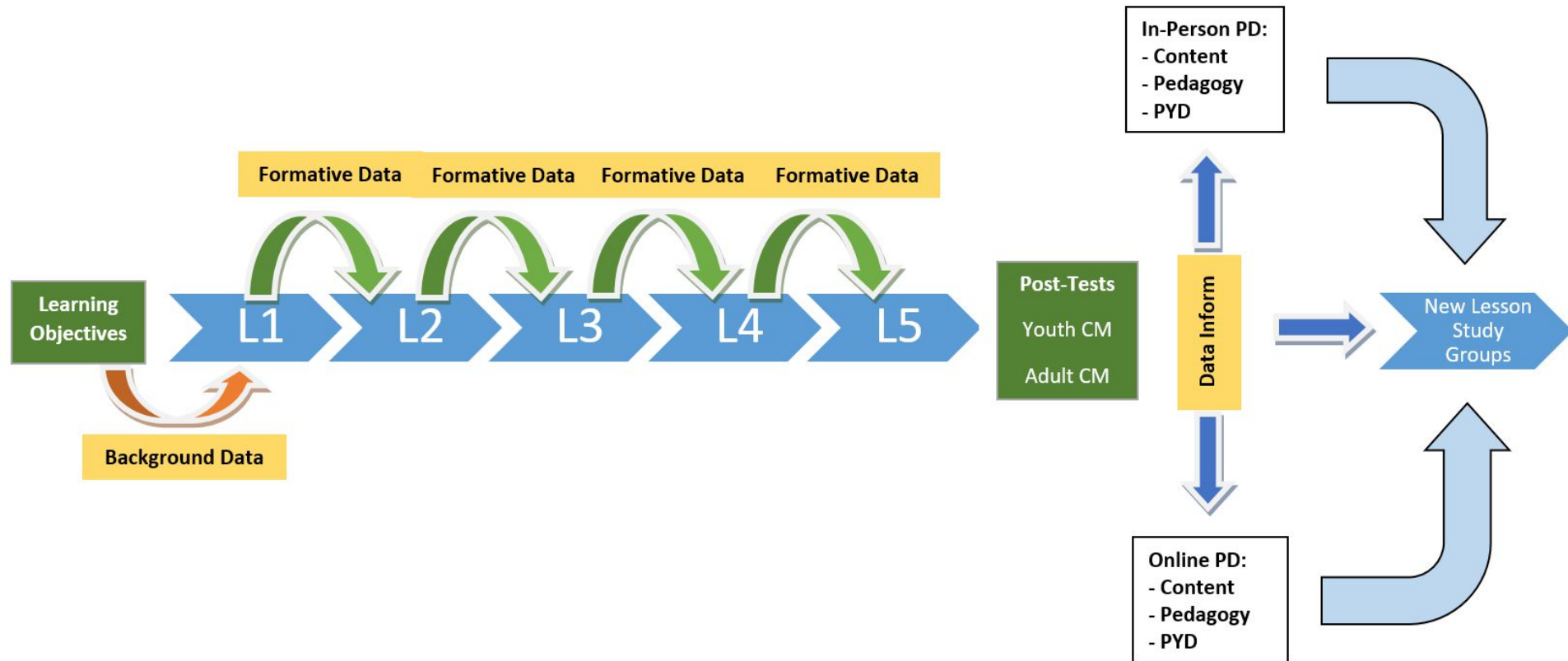
- How will the CoP be proactive in taking charge of the development of its practice?

(Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002)

CoP Type: Lesson Study

- Focus of Lesson Study Groups is on existing lessons/activities/curricula (see Lewis, 2002).
- Educators work collaboratively to refine or adapt existing lessons to their settings, programs, and learners.
- Accomplished through thoughtful and informed *reflective practice* that occurs over a period of time.
- Use information from previous lessons to plan subsequent lessons. *Reflective practice*.
- Educators collect and analyze information (formative data); use data from their learners to improve their practice. *Reflective practice*.
- **Summary:** Educators make informed, “data-driven” decisions about their instructional practices over extended periods of time.

The Model- *Lesson Study*



CoP Type: Action Research

- Focus of Action Research Groups is on a particular issue within the learning environment (a “burning question”) as a means to improve practice (see Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014).
- Pose a question; collect and analyze information from various sources. *Reflective practice.*
- Develop a plan to address finding; implement the plan and collect additional information. *Reflective practice.*
- Keep, revise, or alter plan. *Reflective practice.*

Summary: Educators make informed, “data-driven” decisions about their instructional practices over extended periods of time.

CoP Type: Professional Learning Community (PLC)

- “Ongoing groups... who meet regularly for the purposes of increasing their own learning and that of their [learners]” (Lieberman & Miller, 2008, p. 2).
- A forum for sharing; participants engage in dialogue and critique.
- Guide *reflection* on teaching through *reflection* on learning.
- Engage in observation, problem solving, mutual support, advice giving, and peer teaching and learning.
- Make data-driven decisions through *reflective practice*.
- Develop a core set of strategies to connect their learning to targeted learner outcomes.

Summary: Educators make informed, “data-driven” decisions about their instructional practices over extended periods of time.

Benefits of CoPs

- Educators:
 - Make **informed decisions** about their instructional practices.
 - Become **reflective** in their work.
 - Grow to become **purposeful** in their instructional choices by being **systematic** and **intentional** in their CoP.

Benefits of CoPs

- CoPs offer educators continued **motivation**, **acknowledgment**, and **support** of self-development efforts (Mycue 2000).
- Participation in CoPs often **saves time later**; increases participants' **confidence**; and advances **knowledge and skills of participants and organizations** (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).
- CoPs provide a forum to **mentor novices** (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

Benefits of CoPs

- Educators' enhance their abilities to **facilitate reform-based learning strategies with their students.**
 - *Must experience reform-based practices to understand how to facilitate them.
- Promotes **understanding of student thinking and misconceptions.** (**Note:** Misconceptions are a challenge re. inquiry-based learning.)
- Promotes collegial interactions.

Challenges of CoPs

- **Shifting our perspective:** Moving from the idea that mastery resides with the experts to mastery residing within the members of a CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991).
- **Time:** Making a **longer-term commitment** to a form of **open-ended professional development** (Buysee, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003).
- **Sustaining the CoP over time:**
 - Potential – Discovering common ground
 - Coalescing – Launch a CoP; build relationships and trust; create routines
 - Maturing – Form identity; take charge of practice and grow
 - Stewardship – Established group; add new members; voice of influence
 - Legacy – Let go; define legacy; remain in touch

Challenges of CoPs – Higher Ed.

- **Reward Structure:** IHEs do not traditionally reward teaching; research and publications are emphasized re. tenure decisions.
- Unfamiliarity with **Reflective Practice** as it **pertains to teaching.**
- College-level teaching is typically **on-the-job training**; departmental cultures are strong influences as to how faculty develop and teach courses.

➤ **Note:**

- Anderson et al. (2011) recommend formation of faculty study group as one strategy to improve teaching.
- Further, some universities have formed centers and/or programs to promote improved teaching and learning (e.g., RTA).

Size of a CoP

- Some CoPs are small; some are large(r).
- Key points to consider relative to CoP size (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002):
 - A critical mass is needed to sustain interactions and provide multiple perspectives.
 - Groups that are too large can inhibit direct interactions among participants.

Recommendations for Effective of Operation of CoPs

- **Communicate clearly and listen carefully – egalitarian discussions are ideal.** Remember: Everyone, regardless of his/her level of experience, can make valuable contributions to the lesson study process.
- **Shared ownership and responsibility.** A CoP is a collaborative endeavor that is meant to improve learners' knowledge and skills through a joint effort among educators.
- **Emphasis is on the learners, not the educators.** Focus on the learning and development of the target audience. Let the data “speak to you”; discover “ah ha” moments.
- **Share your views willingly, but respect the views of others.**
- **Ask and welcome questions for clarification.**
- **Be open to new ideas and views.** Change happens!
- **Make time commitments; honor time commitments; honor time limits.**
- **Set goals; achievable objectives week to week; remain on task.**

Forums for CoPs

- In-person
- Online (synchronous; asynchronous)
- Blended learning opportunities

Evaluating a CoP

- Systematic data collection and analysis are key to guiding capacity building (Floden et al., 1995).
- Proposed strategy: **explanatory sequential mixed methods design** (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
 - Quantitative and Qualitative strands
- Quantitative data to assess development with respect to key constructs (common across all CoP types).
- Follow-up qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the progress of CoP participants.

Evaluating a CoP

Phase 1: Quantitative Strand

Survey-Based Data Collection on Key Constructs:

■ **Pedagogy**

- The Use of Inquiry Practices survey (Smith, 2013), an instrument adapted from the Inquiry-Based Instruction in Secondary Science Classrooms (IISSC) survey used by Gejda and LaRocco (2006), will be used to assess the inquiry-based instructional practices.

■ **Disposition**

- The Teacher Disposition Index (Shulte et al., 2005), which is a validated instrument that addresses two constructs: Learner-Centered Disposition and Professionalism; Curriculum-Centered Disposition.
- This tool would be modified slightly to reflect the appropriate terminology of the 4-H context.

Evaluating a CoP

Phase 2: Qualitative Strand

Interview-Based Data Collection:

- Trends in survey data will inform interview question development.
 - Goal is to take a “deeper dive” into application of pedagogical methodology and disposition (and content if desired).
 - Since main constructs (pedagogy and disposition) are consistent across contexts, sample banks of questions could be developed to help guide interview structure.
 - Themes in interview data can be extracted using Constant Comparison Analysis (Hatch, 2002).

Questions?



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