Informal learning in a formal programme.

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Professional Development Manager for Learning and Teaching.
Overview.

- Background
- Practice what you teach
- CiLT structure and redesign
- Five examples of informal learning activities with feedback from participants
- Not just for CiLT...
- Concluding remarks
Background.

Karen Ford & I joined the Professional Development Team for Learning and Teaching in 2012.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (CiLT) was taught through **PowerPoint-heavy** workshop weeks and assessed through two **6,000-word** dissertations.
Teaching teachers “teaching” is best achieved through learning activities that engage with day-to-day practice.

This, therefore, draws heavily on informal learning.

"Want to hear something scary? This is the third time this week I've gotten off the bus and still remember what I learned."
CiLT Structure.

Two 30-credit modules with same overall structure:

1. Engaging with Literature
2. Workshop week
3. Engagement with informal learning activities
4. Teaching observation(s)
5. Assessment by portfolio & viva

- One month before workshop week
- Over eight months after workshop week
- Nine months after workshop week
Redesign of CiLT.

Formal learning activities for the first module include:

- Pre-requisite activity: engaging with literature
- Writing personal teaching philosophy
- Peer feedback activities
- Critical reading
- Session plan and self-evaluation from the workshop week
- Reciprocal peer teaching observation
- Observation of experienced teachers
- Mapping practice to the UKPSF
Informal learning activities for the first module include:

• Peer-led community of learning sessions
• Conversation with colleague on personal tutoring, support and guidance
• Evaluation of two continuing professional development (CPD) sessions
• Evaluating and addressing students’ needs
• Observation of three departmental colleagues’ teaching

For classification of activities in the second module, see: Ford & Russell (2017).
Example of informal learning 1.

Collegiate conversations are designed to embed good practice by encouraging colleagues to talk to each other regularly about elements of teaching practice (eg personal tutoring, admissions, work-life balance).

Personal Tutoring, Support & Guidance

This assignment requires you to carry out a short, focussed, conversation with a more senior colleague in your department who has responsibilities for academic and/or personal support about supporting student needs.
To consider before the discussion:

• Why did you choose this colleague for a peer conversation about personal tutoring/giving guidance?

• What do you think are important factors for a personal tutor/guidance role?

• Identify an issue that could arise in a personal tutor/guidance role that you would like to discuss with your colleague.

Reflection after discussion:

• Write a brief reflection on your conversation which considers a) what you gained from this conversation and b) how it might inform your own practice
Feedback from participants:

“Good to have an excuse to talk to people.”

January 2014 Module 1

“I wouldn't have necessarily had these focused discussions if it wasn't for CiLT and I did find them helpful”

January 2014 Module 1

“Has brought about some changes and made it acceptable to discuss teaching.”

September 2015 Module 2

“Getting the low down on practices across the department helped me develop, but also gave a valuable insight into how the department came to be in its current position. This has given me a better soapbox to argue for change from in an effort to improve department practices.”

September 2015 Module 2
Example 2.

Template provided to support thinking about the needs of students in a particular cohort. Explores learner diversity, assessing prior learning, and engaging students in their learning.

Assignment 5: Evaluating and Addressing Students' Needs

This assignment asks you to consider a particular group of learners you work with (e.g. the cohort from a module you teach, research supervisees, CPD programme participants etc) and explore how you identify and address their needs. An electronic copy of this template is available from the assessment section on MOLE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning &amp; teaching context (brief outline)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details of subject, delivery mode, level, length of contact (e.g. year one sociology module for 1 semester 1 hour lecture per week + 1 hour seminar per fortnight)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Number of learners: (e.g. 500 for lecture, 12 for seminar) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying group and individual diversity (250 words maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What characteristics/factors have you identified for these particular learners that could influence their learning? (age, cultural background, work experience, gender, disability etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you identify the characteristics/factors? (methods used)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have you addressed the characteristics/factors to meet the learners' needs? (give an example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you determine if the learners' needs have been met? (assessing impact)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessing prior knowledge and skills (250 words maximum)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did you assess the prior knowledge and skills of the learners, both subject specific and academic/transferable? (methods used)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you discover about their prior knowledge and skills? (e.g. range and levels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have you addressed the needs identified? (give an example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you determine if the learners' needs have been met? (assessing impact)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Engaging students in the learning process (250 words maximum)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you engage these learners during the session?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you monitor student learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How, when and what type of feedback do you elicit from these students? (give an example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose of your approach to eliciting feedback? How do you respond to the feedback you gather? (give an example)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On completion, this assignment should be inserted into your Module 1 Portfolio.
Example 3.

Teaching observations in Module 1 prepare our students for their formal observation with their tutor in Module 2. They also highlight the value of observations as part of day-to-day teaching practice.

**Module 1 observations**

During Module 1 you will participate in eight teaching observation activities, either as observer or observed.

During this set of observations your own teaching will be observed twice. There are four types of observation:

- Observation A: **GiLT Peer** (reciprocal)
- Observation B: **Departmental colleagues** (3 as observer)
- Observation C: **Departmental Colleague** (reciprocal)
- Observation D: “**Good**” **Teacher** (1 as observer)
Feedback from participants:

“It was really, really helpful to have the opportunity to observe such a variety of teaching and also to receive feedback on my own sessions. I try to do this now whenever I get the chance and even did an extra observation (outside the portfolio) for someone else in my department for their departmental observation.”

March 2013 Module 1

“Really enjoyed these. Great to learn how others approach their teaching. Also great for my confidence to have some positive feedback on my teaching!”

September 2015 Module 1

“It was useful to concentrate on teaching style. I found being observed improved my teaching as I focussed on how I was teaching rather than the subject area as I usually do, for example, explaining learning objectives and teaching environment.”

September 2015 Module 1
Example 4.

Critique of the Module Approval Form/Unit Syllabus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critique of:</th>
<th>(e.g. Module title)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My teaching role:</td>
<td>(e.g. module tutor, lecturer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examine the design as a whole and the key aspects of the design (Intended Learning Outcomes, Teaching and Learning Activities, Assessment Tasks) according to Biggs, and identify any problems and suggest alternatives (e.g. muddled relationship between stated aims and Intended Learning Outcomes). (200 words)

Discuss the extent to which the aspects of the design (Intended Learning Outcomes, Teaching and Learning Activities, Assessment Tasks) are aligned to each other and to the needs and subject learning of the described students. Give examples to support your discussion (200 words)

How well does the module (or unit if not credit bearing) align to the wider programme? (100 words)
Engagement in this (and its preparatory activity in the Module 2 workshop week) has seen a dramatic improvement to design considerations for new, and revised, modules across the university.

**Which aspects of the design would/could you change to improve the alignment and why?** (150 words)

**If you implemented the changes, how and when would you evaluate the impact they are having on students’ learning experiences?** Give an example to support your choice. (150 words)

**Other issues, comments on the design?**
Peer relationships developed as part of CiLT have lasted in many cases. Peers continue to meet and support each other in their communities of learning.

### Example 5.

**CiLT Peer-Led Community of Learning**

The CiLT programme is designed so that participants become a member of, and participate in, a community of learning to promote collaboration and dialogue.

The CiLT Peer-Led Communities of Learning are designed to facilitate the development of interdisciplinary peer relationships through peer-led discussion to enable ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning, the giving and receiving of appropriate feedback and the development of resilience.

**Your Peer-Led Community of Learning sessions are designed to promote:**

1. Group exploration and discussion of a teaching and learning problem/issue identified from the group as a whole (see suggested approach below).
2. Discussion of your progress on CiLT with group members from your cohort including: taking stock of progress thus far, the assessment activities you are currently focussing on, looking ahead to forthcoming assessments and activities.

**It is crucial that you structure your sessions in a way that you will find productive.**

You might like to consider the following approach which is based on the Action Learning Set Model:

1. Each member shares a teaching problem/issue they are experiencing with the group within an agreed time limit.
2. The group agree a theme or problem to focus on from those presented/shared.
3. The group explore the problem and possible approaches to addressing it through in-depth questioning. Note that the idea is to question in a creative and supportive way (avoid interrogation!) to identify possibilities that might normally be overlooked.

**For further information about Action learning Sets and questioning techniques visit:** [http://www.imcasocrates.com/jhta/Briefing_on_action_learning.pdf](http://www.imcasocrates.com/jhta/Briefing_on_action_learning.pdf)

If you do not wish to use this approach you will need to agree an alternative as a group. It is important that everyone is given a chance to contribute and that these reflective sessions are focussed (rather than simply being an opportunity to ‘sound off’ or complain in an unconstructive manner).
Feedback from participants:

“These gave me a good excuse to discuss things that I am passionate about in teaching that I do not usually raise with research academics.”

January 2014 Module 1

“This was probably the biggest upside to the CiLT module - the chance to collaborate, discuss, and gripe with other colleagues across disciplines.”

September 2015 Module 1

“Kept us communicating. Made new friends. Conversations quite helpful and a friendly sense of competition was also good.”

September 2015 Module 1

“These I think are a key part of CiLT. They foster community across areas of the university, and also help to insure [sic] that you keep on track with the deadlines.”

September 2015 Module 2
Work carried out for CiLT encourages participants to build a bank of ‘artefacts of evidence’ for use in cases for promotion or professional recognition for HEA fellowships.

- Teaching observation forms and feedback
- Feedback given by students
- Feedback provided to students
- Session/Lesson plans
- Programme specification documents and module approval forms (or similar)
- Module outlines
- Assessment materials
- Handouts, worksheets
- Records of ‘in situ’ CPD activity with brief account/s of the impact on your practice
- Accounts of self-evaluation of your teaching practice (e.g., journal entries or notes)
- Screen dumps from online activities resources

Not just for CiLT...
Feedback from participants:

“While the application was not without its stressful moments I found it the most valuable and motivating process I have undertaken in my 15 years at the university. It is brilliant to receive recognition for the hard work. It feels like a career reboot and I recommend it to anyone.”

SFHEA Applicant September 2016

“Thanks to you all for making the LTPRS Personal Pathway available to everyone supporting Learning and Teaching at the University.”

SFHEA Applicant July 2016
Concluding remarks.

Professional development involves *learning on the job*. We have demonstrated that this also applies to learning for a formal professional qualification (PGCert).

Informal learning is just as important as formal learning: make the ‘informal’ count.

This will be explored further in this afternoon’s session using a framework to explore *Professional development to transform the student learning experience* (*Seros*, 3pm).
Acknowledgement & Reference.

This work was carried out with Dr Karen Ford SFHEA

k.ford@sheffield.ac.uk

You can find out more about aspects of the programme in

Karen’s workshop on Saturday (Kallipatira, 12.30pm)

Language in focus.
CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This is to certify that

Nigel Russell

The University of Sheffield International Faculty, CITY College, Greece

participated in the LIF2018 conference on

Contemporary Means and Methods in ELT and Applied Linguistics Thessaloniki, Greece

May 3-5, 2018

and presented a paper entitled:

Informal Learning in a Formal Programme

LIF2018 Conference Organizers

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cem Can

Dr. Paschalia Patsala

Dr. Zoi Tatsioka
Informal learning in a formal programme.

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