Evaluating Professional Learning Designs

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Kane Bradford  kane.bradford@aitsl.edu.au
Lois Brown Easton  leastoners@aol.com
Terry Morganti-Fisher  tmorgantifisher@gmail.com
Session Description

Hear about and apply the results of a study that looked at effective professional learning designs. Know the components and elements of professional learning designs from lesson study to online or blended learning. Evaluate a variety of professional learning designs and consider your own models currently in use.

Essential Question

How can educators use a model of effective professional learning design to select a design, assess the quality of a current PL design, or evaluate a completed design?

Overview of the Agenda

1. Describing an effective professional learning experience.
2. Analyzing that experience according to the model and its components and elements.
3. Sharing the analyses.
4. Learning about AITSL and the impetus for the professional learning design initiative.
5. Learning about how the model was created, including the 28 designs that were deeply analyzed.

Participant Outcomes

Participants will:

Know a model for effective professional learning designs.

Understand at a deep level how the components and elements of the model apply to designs with which they have worked.

Know why and how the model was developed.

Know about the Australia Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and its resources.

Apply the model to a design they would like to explore.

Identify an action they would like to take as a result of this session.
A Learning Design Anatomy

Context

Educator Learning

Environment

Implementation

Student Outcomes

Delivery

Action

Flexibility

Transference

Tools

Features

Content

Aesthetics

Accessibility

Structure

Participants

Conditions
Some Useful Definitions Related to the Anatomy¹

**Professional Learning (PL):** This refers to the formal or informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice and a school’s collective effectiveness, as measured by improved student learning, engagement with learning and well-being. “Learnings” means that the knowledge, skills and ability acquired through the professional learning will be translated into practice.

**Learning Design:** This term refers to the process undertaken where choices are made toward developing new professional learning or reviewing existing professional learning. The Learning Design Anatomy defines the elements of learning Design, which should inform those design choices. The term is also used to refer to the entire collection of those “choices,” the “sum of the parts,” as combined to constitute professional learning.

**Learning Design Anatomy:** This term characterizes the model on the previous page as a complex structure of internal workings, all of which affect and depend upon one another. As a support for considering learning designs, the Anatomy can be viewed “piece by piece” or as the whole, the “sum of the parts.”

**Components:** This term refers to the three sub parts of the Educator Learning sphere of the Learning Design Anatomy, i.e., “Environment,” “Delivery” and “Action.” The components are further broken down into ten “Elements.”

**Elements:** This term refers to the ten elements of professional learning design, positioned within the three Components of the Learning Design Anatomy. The ten elements are Participants, Conditions, Structure, Accessibility, Aesthetics, Content, Features, Tools, Transference and Flexibility.

Using The Anatomy to Analyze Your Professional Learning Design

Your Design:

**Directions:** Start with the component that you think might be most helpful in terms of analyzing your design. Then consider the element in that component that might be most helpful. Investigate the description and probing questions as a way to analyze your design according to the element.
Component: Environment
Element: Participant

A Description of the Element:
What participants need and their behaviors and the type of learning environment that will resonate with them. Choices that lead to engagement or disengagement. Learning needs unique to adults.

Probing Questions:
• Who are the participants? Are the right people involved? Who else should be involved in the learning?
• Have the focus issues, problems or goals been clearly identified and agreed by participants/learning communities in participant-led and designed professional learning?
• What is the purpose of the professional learning? Is this clear to participants?
• What evidence or data do they have in terms of adult or student learning needs?
• Are the learning goals aligned with the needs of participants?
• What outcomes do the participants want? Think Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations, and Behaviors (KASAB, Killion, 2008).
• What do participants already know and what do they seek to learn in order to close the gap between current and desired practice?
• What are the learning preferences of the participants? How do I/we/my team/my staff learn best? Does the learning design support this way of learning?
• Have we learned new things about our participants that should be accounted for in the learning design?
• Does the purpose of the professional learning match the demand for it? Are we attracting the right participants?
• How will this learning design fit with what I am/we are already doing?

Your Analysis:
Component: Environment
Element: Conditions

A Description of the Element:
The wider operating context, which might include support from leadership, access to required resources, prior knowledge, student data, composition of the learning group, and workload constraints. The operating context and local conditions can be used to enhance opportunities for learning. A learning design should take account of underlying policies and generally accepted practices, the use of data and the gap between desired outcomes and the current reality. Within a local context, there may be either ethical or strategic purpose, goals or objectives that will influence how they engage with learning. Understanding what support the local context can provide and what the learning design can provide needs to be clear from the outset.

Probing Questions:
- What are the broader factors that will influence this professional learning (policies, alternatives, incentives, opportunities, constraints)?
- What can be done to minimize or negate the impact of those factors that might affect learning?
- Have the conditions for our participants changed? What new strategies are required to manage the impact of conditions that might impede learning?
- Does the learning design allow sufficient flexibility to help close the gap between current and desired practice?

Your Analysis:
Component: Delivery
Element: Structure

A Description of the Element:
Structure is concerned with the practical arrangements of learning, e.g., the amount of time it takes and decisions about location and sequence of events. Structural decisions in learning design may be intentionally free, allowing the users to manage their own learning. Others may apply a deliberately sequential approach, requiring the learner to progress through milestones or demonstrate competency before advancing.

Whether job embedded or offsite, there is typically a rationale/catalyst to engage, instruction in theoretical principles, and opportunities to translate theory into classroom practice (Timperley 2007). Effective structures can provide helpful processes and discipline around specific forms of job-embedded professional learning, such as action research and professional learning communities. As with all elements of the Anatomy, decisions about structure should be driven by an understanding of the broader context and the underlying purpose of the learning design.

Probing Questions:
• Is the learning design flexible and easily altered to fit participants’ needs? Can it be tailored to suit individuals?
• What structural design features will optimize learning outcomes for participants in job-embedded professional learning situations such as through a change or improvement process, an action research project, a peer review and coaching process?
• What features does the professional learning design need to make it usable for this group?
• Are participants progressing through the learning? Do participants disengage at any time?
• Are we making sufficient progress with our job-embedded professional learning?

Your Analysis:
Component: Delivery
Element: Accessibility

A Description of the Element:
A learning design will apply strategies that provide the necessary information that enables the user to navigate and participate in the learning environment without difficulty. Online, these factors are often easily identified and can be evidenced for example in a website’s architecture, i.e., an intuitive layout. In face-to-face learning, accessibility may include things such as time commitment or pre-reading, convenience of location, and the way the activity is facilitated. In job-embedded professional learning, accessibility would be enhanced through the provision of ongoing support from lead practitioners or experts from within or outside the school.

Probing Questions:
• Is the learning design flexible and easily altered to fit participants’ needs? Can it be tailored to suit individuals?
• What accessibility design features will optimize learning outcomes for participants in job-embedded professional learning situations such as through a change or improvement process, an action research project, a peer review and coaching process?
• What is getting in the way of accessibility? Can this be remedied?
• Is the learning design easily accessible and navigable?
• Does the learning design have a logic or flow that helps users navigate it?
• Can we identify new ways to make our learning design more accessible?

Your Analysis:
A Description of the Element:
Aesthetics refers to those aspects of a learning design that elicit a sensory response from the participants. Aesthetic choices within a learning design include decision about the visual, auditory and physical construction of the professional learning that enable engagement with the learning. In an online environment, aesthetic choices are most obvious in the visual themes of the integration of multi-modal objects. In job-embedded and face-to-face learning, the aesthetic choices may include decisions about the physical environment such as place to meet, seating or supporting on-screen resources. Aesthetics may be accomplished by balancing individual and group work, for example, or increasing activity or creative opportunities. The aesthetic professional learning design has the right level of challenge for participants.

Probing Questions:
- Do the learning design aesthetics engage participants?
- Does our learning design provide challenging experiences? Is the relationship between theory and practice helpful?
- How do participants feel about their learning experience?
- What aesthetics do I/we find attractive or engaging? Does the learning design have any aesthetics that would disengage me/us from the learning?

Your Analysis:
Component: Delivery
Element: Content

A Description of the Element:
Content relates to the knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors (Killion, 2008) that educators work on through professional learning. Content may be subject-area specific or related to pedagogical, personal, or professional knowledge or practice. The alignment between content, purpose, and context is crucial. As successful learning design will feature a selection of content that both meets the needs of and extends participants. Content selection should involve a deep consideration of the other elements of the learning design (aesthetics, features, participants, etc.) to promote engagement, foster understanding and facilitate the successful transfer of knowledge. Decisions about content should consider what to include as well as what to leave out. The credibility of material presented, the use of applied expertise, and choices about the kinds of content that may be foregrounded will determine this.

Probing Questions:
- Is the content aligned to the purpose of the learning and participants’ needs?
- Is the content sensitive to the context of the participant?
- Does it help us learn what we need to do to promote our students’ learning needs and well-being?
- What content do participants need to know? What content will extend and challenge participants?
- Does the learning design support the content?
- How up-to-date is the content? Have there been changes in our field that would require changes in our content?
- Does the learning design have the right amount and mix of content that I/we require and need?
- Does the content provide new challenges and extend us as participants? Does it engage me/us as learners?

Your Analysis:

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Component: Delivery
Element: Features

A Description of the Element:
Features are the practices associated with the delivery of, or mode of participation in, professional learning. Features include approaches such as face-to-face, remote, self-directed, online, facilitated, individual, collaborative and/or blended forms of these. Participants respond to stimuli in many different ways, so the optimal features for participation in professional learning need consideration for each individual and group.

Features also include activities such as group work, lecture or mini-lecture, discussion and dialogue, collaboration, individual work, reading and writing, creation of products, analysis, providing feedback, reflection, visiting classrooms, looking at student work, etc.

Probing Questions:
• Does the format of delivery or mode of participation meet participants’ needs and the purposes of the learning?
• Does the format of delivery meet our learning styles?
• Does the format of the learning align with our context?

Your Analysis:
Component: Delivery
Element: Tools

A Description of the Element:
Tools are instruments used to enhance knowledge transfer, deepen engagement and support understanding of content aims. Typically they include items such as templates, proformas or schematics, visuals, products (such as student work), protocols, surveys, forms, questions, polls or other interactive elements. Tools are those elements of the learning design that encourage participation through activity, interactions, collaboration, application or review. They encourage the learner to test and apply their understanding as an active participant in the learning.

Probing Questions:
• What resources or tools are required to support participants? Do they require updating to meet participant needs?
• Are there new technologies available that could improve our learning design, format of delivery, or support learner agency and collaboration?
• Do the learning tools meet our learning styles and needs? Do they align with content?

Your Analysis:
Component: Action
Element: Transference

A Description of the Element:
Transference is concerned with aspects of the learning design that directly support the application of learning in context. It relates to the ease with which participants transfer new knowledge and understanding, implementing their learning.

Transference may be expressly supported through tailored materials and resources embedded within the learning, designed as scaffolds for use in context, such as templates, guides or outlines. Alternately, transference may occur through the combination of elements within the learning design, for example, a series of learning experiences encouraging participants to reflect on implications of a new concept as part of a broader inquiry, examination of student data to determine needs and approach, receiving feedback from observation, linking this to theory.

Deeper understanding and transference are supported by multiple opportunities to learn through a range of activities focused on content aims. Implementation is sustained through:

- In-depth understanding of theory which serves as a tool to assist instructional decision-making
- The skills of inquiry to judge the impact of teaching on learning and to judge next steps (Timperley 2007)

Probing Questions:
- What support is required for participants to successfully transfer their learning to the classroom? Does the learning design provide this support?
- How are participants supported to transfer learning into practice or create new knowledge and improve practices through cycles of goal setting, enacting, monitoring, and adjusting (Timperley 2007)? How can the learning design be altered to better support such practice?
- What support can the learning design provide and what needs to be provided from the learner’s context and situation? Is this clear from the outset?
- What interim success do we expect for participants? Are they clearly outlined in the learning?
- Have participants’ support needs changed? Do we need to provide more or less support?
- Can the learning be altered to better enable transfer of learning to a range of situations or contexts?
- Is the learning design clear about what is required for transference and application of learning?

Your Analysis:
Component: Action
Element: Flexibility

A Description of the Element:
Flexibility refers to the degree to which educators are supported to reflect on and evaluate their learning and apply it in a variety of situations and contexts over time. A flexible learning design will be broad enough to provide professional learning for a variety of situations. It will support educators to link their learning to changes in the classroom or school and implement new learnings, perhaps even in a different way to what was originally intended.

Flexible learning designs accommodate variability in application, support participants to reflect, review, and reassess and encourage a sustained, ongoing view of learning. Flexible learning designs consider how the learning may be applied and address the diversity of such applications.

Probing Questions:
- Does the learning help participants link their learning to changes in the classroom or school?
- Does it enable participants to apply the learning to different situations and contexts? Is the learning more broadly applicable? How easy will it be for participants to do this?
- Does the design engage participants in their self-evaluation of the learning? Does it help them review and reassess their learning and make adjustments accordingly?
- Do learners view professional learning as an ongoing process?

Your Analysis:
References


For more:

[www.aitsl.edu.au](http://www.aitsl.edu.au)
# AITSL Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Trends in Professional Learning and Performance and Development (Horizon Scan) research</strong></td>
<td>Based on an extensive ‘horizon scan’ of more than 50 cross-sectoral organisations (including education, arts, technology, business, health etc.), the Global Trends in Professional Learning and Performance Development report identifies five global trends in innovative approaches to professional learning and performance and development globally: Integrated, Immersive, Design-led, Market-led and Open.</td>
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<td><strong>Innovative PL and P&amp;D: An interactive guide</strong></td>
<td>The Innovative PL and P&amp;D: An interactive guide looks at the 50 examples of innovative approaches profiled in the Global Trends report. For an in-depth look at six of the innovative approaches, detailed and graphic case studies are available.</td>
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<td><strong>Designing Professional Learning</strong></td>
<td>The Designing Professional Learning report provides a snapshot of the key elements involved in creating effective and engaging professional learning in a globally dispersed market. Whether you are developing professional learning from scratch, enhancing an existing program or evaluating professional learning for yourself or others, the Designing Professional Learning report provides detailed guidance on how to configure and/or evaluate your own context-specific professional learning model/s.</td>
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<td><strong>Innovation Grants Project (2013) – video findings of practices in Australian Schools</strong></td>
<td>The Innovation Grants project sought to investigate innovative approaches to professional learning and performance and development. 16 groups across Australia took part in the program, and eight key characteristics of effective performance and development and professional learning were identified. The information generated from the project encourages professional associations, systems and sectors, teachers, school leaders, and education groups, to consider innovative changes that could enhance their existing programs and support teacher improvement.</td>
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<td><strong>AITSL Teacher Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>The Teacher Toolkit is the one place where AITSL's online tools and resources to support quality teaching can be found. Resources can be accessed by browsing categories or performing a search.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Illustrations of Practice</strong></td>
<td>The Illustrations of Practice are 4-5 minute vignettes that capture authentic teaching practice in a range of contexts, and can help teachers situate their practice within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. There are over 320 Illustrations available online and can be used to support self-evaluation, reflection and professional learning at an individual, team or whole-school level.</td>
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<td><strong>AITSL Self-Assessment Tool</strong></td>
<td>The Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) is an online questionnaire enabling teachers at all career stages, in a range of contexts, to reflect upon their practice in accordance with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The SAT may be used for informal purposes of self-reflection including the identification of strengths and areas for further development, professional learning planning or to set career goals, and for formal purposes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MyStandards App</strong></td>
<td>The free My Standards app makes the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers accessible anywhere, anytime. Collect and annotate your own artefacts, referenced to the Standards to inform and evidence your professional growth. Available on both iOS and android.</td>
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## Learning Forward Resources

| Standards for Professional Learning | Standards for Professional Learning outline the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. Learning Forward is the only association focused solely on the most critical lever in improving schools - building the knowledge and skills of educators. Through the Standards for Professional Learning, Learning Forward leads the field in understanding what links professional learning to improved student achievement. |
| Innovation Configuration Maps | The IC maps provide clear pictures of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning in practice and guide educators in increasing the quality and results of professional learning. Applying any major change in schools requires deep study and commitment to a shared vision of what that change will look like once implemented. Innovation Configuration (IC) maps identify and describe the major components of the standards in operation, helping those in various roles understand the actions they take as part of systemwide implementation. |
| Standards Assessment Inventory 2 | Ensuring that professional learning systems offer all educators the support they need to improve their practices and increase student achievement requires a sophisticated instrument. State, provincial, regional, and local school systems can use the Standards Assessment Inventory 2 (SAI2) to assess the quality of their professional learning. |
| Transforming Professional Learning | Learning Forward’s Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core is a multidimensional initiative focused on developing a comprehensive system of professional learning that spans the distance from the statehouse to the classroom. With an immediate focus on implementing Common Core State Standards and new assessments, the initiative provides resources and tools to assist states, districts, and schools. |
| Knowledge Briefs | Quarterly digital briefs that help practitioners build a deeper foundation and take next steps on specific school improvement questions. |
| Examining the Evidence | The Evidence Database provides members with easy-to-access information about the link between professional learning and student achievement. The entries in the Evidence Database are drawn from a wide variety of sources including research, peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed journals, occasional reports, first-hand stories of success, news reports, and Learning Forward’s publications. |
| The Principals Story Learning Guide: School Leadership Matters | During the past decade, there has been a growing recognition among educators and policymakers that school principals must be instructional leaders who ensure that high-quality teaching occurs in every classroom. This view is backed up by a solid body of evidence showing that leadership places second only to teaching among school-related influences on learning. |