

Communities of Practice for Staff Development: Enhancing International Student Learning

Michael A. Wride and Ciara O'Farrell

Academic Practice and eLearning (CAPSL), 3-4 Foster Place, Trinity College Dublin

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Abstract

The 'New Directions Programme' was established at Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology (TIET), India by Academic Practice and eLearning (CAPSL) at Trinity College Dublin as part of an international educational collaboration. The Programme comprises a series of workshops for teaching staff at TIET facilitated by TCD academic developers, focusing on promoting student-centred approaches in teaching and learning. Three hundred staff have either completed or are in the process of completing the programme. The collaboration between the two institutions also involves a '2 plus 2' programme in which students from TIET complete their final two years at TCD. Thus, there is a necessity for TIET students arriving at TCD to be aware of and to have experienced student-centred approaches to learning. One of the key features of the New Directions programme is supporting the embedding by TIET teaching staff of student-centred practices into the TIET undergraduate curriculum. A prerequisite for the sustainability of the embedded student-centred practices is a shift in the academic staff culture at TIET. In order to promote and sustain this culture, we have established and are supporting Communities of Practice (CoPs) at TIET. The CoPs are comprised of groups of 20 staff from various disciplines who meet regularly between our visits to continue their conversations about teaching and learning, develop their teaching interests, share best practice and develop personal and professional relationships. The CoPs have had a major role in supporting TIET teaching staff in the shift to the student centred learning paradigm.



New Directions Programme

To enable the shift to a new paradigm of student-centred teaching and learning:

- Continuous professional development in academic practice and how this relates to the concept of growth as a teacher
- Reflection on teaching and learning
- Relationship to and importance of the learning and teaching literature (scholarship of teaching and learning)

Workshops (Mar, Apr, Sept: 2016 - 2018)

20 staff in each of 5 cross-disciplinary Groups. TCD Staff facilitate.

Core:

- Student-centred learning
- Assessment
- Curriculum
- Outcomes-based approach to student learning
- Reflection
- Sharing scholarship in teaching and learning

Optional:

At least two to be completed:

- Creative thinking
- Supporting group work
- In-class assessment and student feedback
- TCD-Thapar Teaching Fellows workshops: student self-regulation, student motivation, CoPs for T & L, leadership in T & L, Large Group Teaching



Communities of Practice (CoPs): Apr, May, Aug, Oct, Nov



CoPs: Self-sustaining meetings of the groups of 20 with Chair and Note-Taker. TCD academic developers and TIET management not present. Attendance is currently compulsory.

Topics covered: practice of think-pair-share, reflective practice, creativity, preparing for the assignment (1000 word reflection on and evaluation of a strategy implemented), poster development. Sessions are scheduled by TIET and supported by TCD academic developers.

Bullet point synopses of CoPs sent to CAPSL & TIET management. CoPs are now continuing in a more *ad hoc* manner with staff who have already completed the programme. Ultimate aim is to maintain informal and self-sustaining CoPs through voluntary attendance.

New Directions Showcase Event:



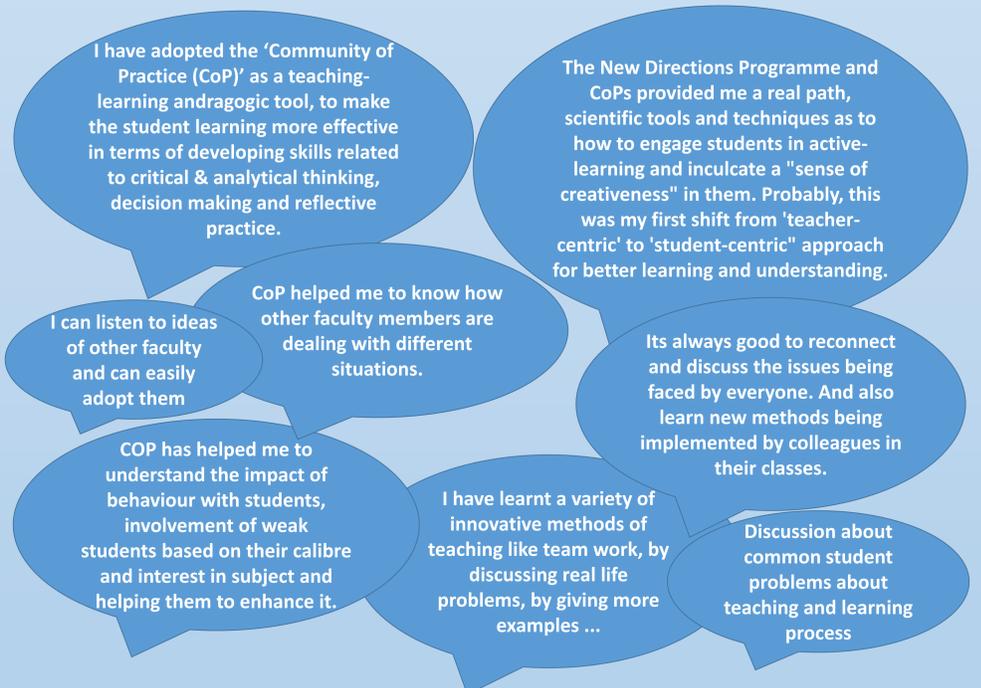
Staff work together in multidisciplinary groups to share best-practice in their student centred innovations, choose a topic of mutual interest and present posters at a Showcase event. A CoP approach was used in poster development.

TIET-TCD Teaching Fellows: Sustaining CoPs at TCD:



5 TIET academic staff from different disciplines were selected to come to TCD for 7 weeks in early 2018 for further professional development. They took part in the Special Purpose Certificate in Academic Practice (SPCert) and attended a 'Train the Trainers' programme. Regular CoPs of the 5 occurred during their time in Dublin, addressing Teaching & Learning topics. A further 5 TIET staff are being selected for 2019. The Teaching Fellows will lead out on the New Directions programme for 2019, while we develop the SPCert at TIET.

Staff Feedback on Effectiveness of CoPs



3 Key Messages from Feedback:

1. Teaching staff developed awareness of student-centred learning approaches in other disciplines and shared best practice with each other.
2. Teaching staff became more empowered, reflective, self-aware and confident in implementing student-centred approaches in their teaching.
3. The CoPs are enabling a shift in culture amongst teaching staff at TIET towards sustainable student-centred learning practices.

References

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