

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
LEARNING IN AN FET CONTEXT

Dr. Sorcha O'Toole

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Problem Statement
- FET Study Context
- Literature Review
- Research Design Framework
- The Intervention
- Study overview
- Cycle of Change
- Findings Framework
- Conclusion
- Final Reflections

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Developing a culture of professional practice learning in an FET context

- Why was that important to me?
- Action research project

MY NOTES ON LITERATURE

Problem area - professional practice learning in an FET specific context

1. Professional teacher learning
2. Effective professional development
3. Learning and teaching processes
4. Professional learning communities

Practical, relevant and have meaning for participants

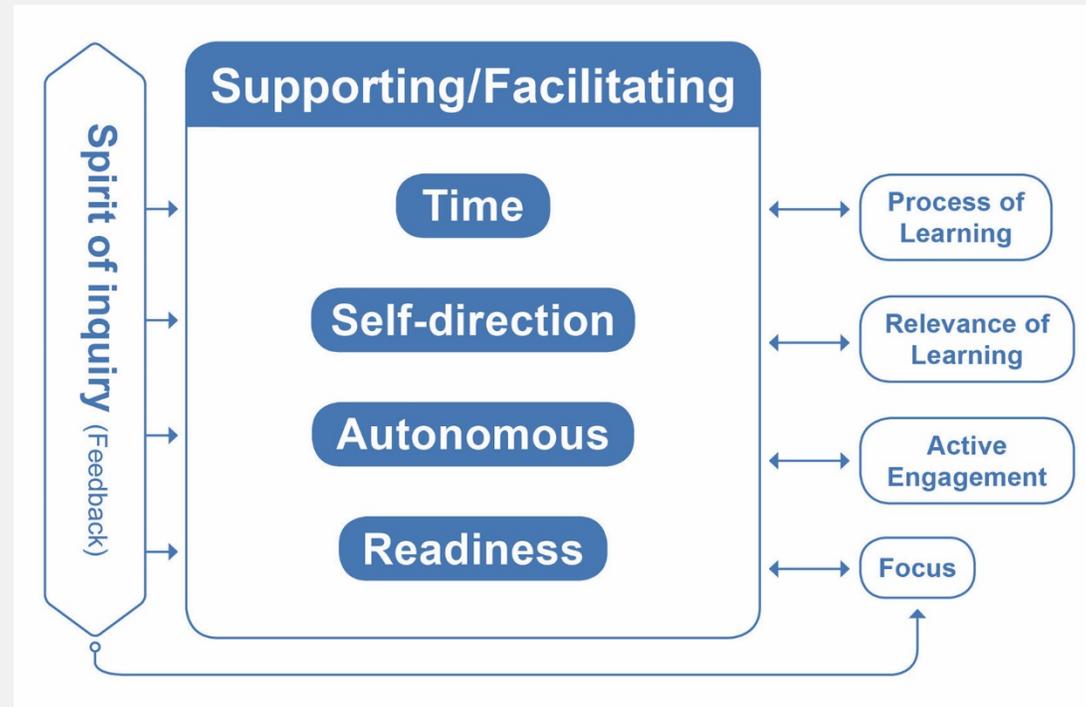
Informed by social constructivist characteristics

Inquiry key element of the process

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do I promote a professional learning community in the FET institution where I work?

RESEARCH DESIGN FRAMEWORK



THE INTERVENTION

- Feedback strategies adapted from AfL theory
 - Four strategies – time in class, focusing on what's next, focused feedback to the task and asking questions

Feedback Strategies			
Strategy 1 Time in class to discuss feedback	Strategy 2 Focusing on what's next	Strategy 3 Focused feedback - self vs. task	Strategy 4 Ask 3 questions for students to respond to

STUDY OVERVIEW

- Preparatory phase
 - Initial workshops
 - Developing the project
- Action research project within a case study
- Data collection methods (interviews, teacher discussion group sessions, researcher diary)
- Three phases
 - Getting along (Jan to May 2015)
 - Making headway (Sep 2015 to Jan 2016)
 - New habits (Feb to June 2016)

New Habits

Phase Three

- Change in habits
- Teacher support, less isolation
- Learning from colleagues
- **Deepening** of practice
- Learner centeredness
- **Embedded** in practice
- Collaborative practice
- Whole centre approach

Cycle of Change

Preparatory Phase

- Introduction to research
- Part of a research project
- Experimenting with intervention (feedback)
- Breaking-in period
- Set the scene

Making Headway

Phase Two

- Teacher engagement
- Teacher reflection
- Teaching team (collegiality)
- Students cognitive stance
- Teacher sharing
- Change in practice
- Teacher **dialogue**

Getting Along

Phase One

- Dialogue on teacher practice
- Teachers sharing and exploring
- Practical nature of intervention was positive
- Relationship building
- Teacher collaboration
- Teacher challenges
- **'Broken ground'**

Teachers Voice

Reflection

"It has made me realise the importance of being more reflective in the work because this is not one of those jobs where you come and walk away. This is a job that concerns people and their learning"

Collaboration

"Its good for organisation, it gets everyone going and then also you get a chance to integrate and overlap where you can see things where you don't get a chance"

Deprivatising practice

"As we do better we become unified."

"I think it is important for all teachers to keep revamping and getting new approaches and new techniques"

Learner focus

"It helps me to organise the class a bit better because you are getting it from their perspective; sometimes there are things that I miss out on"

Sharing of practice

*"We are communicating more I feel since we started this"
"You don't feel as a teacher that you are on your own...it's great"*

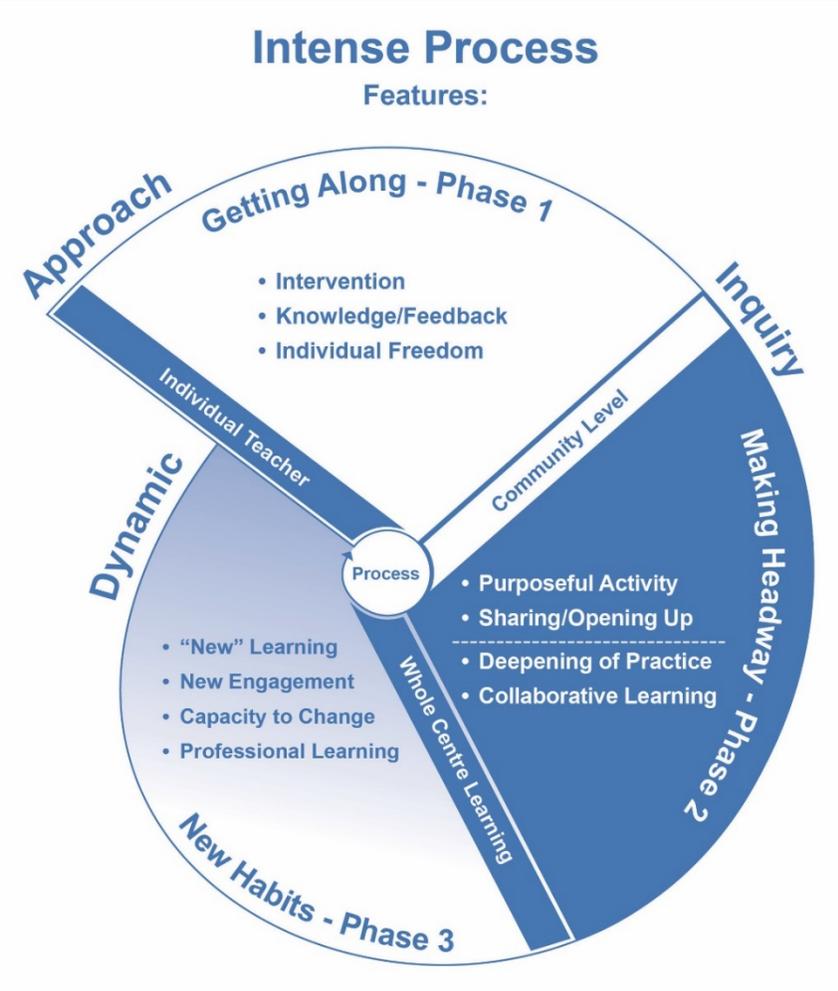
Change

"I'm highlighting it a bit more than I normally would"

"If we are all doing the same thing it's a much better result than maybe one or two trying it"

Centre approach

FINDINGS FRAMEWORK



CONCLUSION

- How can I promote a professional learning community in the FET context?
 - Relevant and meaningful intervention
 - Spirit of inquiry
 - Collaborative endeavour
 - Time and space for dialogue
 - Support and facilitation
 - Freedom of teachers to influence shape of the project

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

- Contribution to knowledge
 - Knowledge on institutional level teacher collaboration on professional learning practice
 - Inform implementation of the FET Strategy – quality provision being one of its five goals
 - Inform the FET PD Strategy – local and relevant CPD
 - Potentially could be an element of Cosán - Teaching Council Framework for CPD for teachers
 - Changing role of the lifelong learning practitioner

WILIAM 2011

“Teaching is such a complex craft that one lifetime is not enough to master it..., but by rigorously focusing on their classroom practice, teachers can continue to improve throughout their career. Therefore, we need a commitment from teachers — not one to attend a certain number of hours of professional development per year but a career-long commitment to the continuous improvement of classroom practice, as well as an agreement to develop their practice in ways that are likely to improve outcomes for students” (Wiliam 2011)

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Sorcha O'Toole