



Disrupting the traditional academic development model: Technology Demonstrators

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Technology Demonstrators (TechDems) is an initiative at UniSQ for collective oversight of educational technology use in learning and teaching. It is an evolving Community of Practice (CoP) inspired by the work of Treynor-Wenger (2015) on groups of people who engage in a process of collective learning. Generating excitement around new ideas including technologies is not hard but sustaining interest and supporting skill development and appropriate edtech purchases that lead to shifting current practice is a challenge. TechDems addresses the challenge of changemaking by providing the means for interaction, sharing and collaboration.

TechDems aligns with the theory and practice of Connectivism and Collaborativism. As such it is disruptive by not providing a 'sit and get' approach to academic development but encouraging ongoing participation and contribution. With regards to Connectivism Siemens (2005) states, "The pipe is more important than the content in the pipe" implying that learning and knowledge are contextual and new information is constantly being acquired through technology-infused networked participation and connected practices. Other influences include Collaborativism (Harasim, 2017) that builds on constructivist learning theory and the use of the internet for collaborative knowledge creation, and Learning Collaboratives (Lindsay, 2016) that foster confidence and autonomy, extended local and global communities and collaboration that leads to co-creation. Aligned with CoP ideals, Learning Collaboratives disrupt expectations around how we learn and how we affect change within learning and teaching which is not in isolation.

Underlying the purpose and activity of TechDems is the recognition that it is imperative to explore and discover innovative ways to facilitate leading edge, digitally-infused teaching through what we call the four pillars: technology, pedagogy, research and evaluation. TechDems is unique in that it provides a hub for all participants and encourages distributed and socially constructed, individual and group driven, learning systems prioritising transparency, sharing, and collaboration when learning virtually and with technology.

By flipping traditional models and focusing on needs that are user driven, TechDem Learning and Teaching Quality Partners work relationally with academics on a range of activities. Piloting and evaluating new educational technologies, such as Engageli, allows participants to work collaboratively whilst learning the new platform and creating socially embedded decisions with regards to how and if the tool will be adopted. Hosting internationally blended events, such as a hybrid learning workshop with German university JLU-Giessen, demonstrates how learning technologies can be used to create global learning, networks, and understandings. SIGS, such as the Student Engagement SIG, or the Student Portfolio SIG are participant led allowing members to share their passions, projects, and frustrations. In addition, TechDems promotes 'Champions' as leaders within the academic environment; hosts academic 'ThinkPiece' video vignettes of shared practice; collaborates with diverse stakeholder such as ICT, Schools, and other stakeholders; and provides a regular newsletter and dynamic website for enhanced communication and access to learning artefacts. In each of these examples from TechDem practice, the traditional linear model of professional learning is disrupted to enhance collectivism and collaborativism.

As evidence of best practice TechDems are driving change through a focus on the needs of stakeholders in conjunction with institutional strategies for student success. The approach provides three key opportunities for change: connection to 'experts'; opportunities to share practice and learning; and, increases in the use of pedagogically appropriate technologies for

learning. Others can learn from and emulate the range and scope of ongoing projects and CoP activities. Feedback from participants in the program continue to indicate positive impacts on their teaching and learning, as a result the TechDems are initiating ongoing research into the effectiveness of edtech tools and associated pedagogies in learning.

Keywords: Community of Practice, professional learning, educational technology

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