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People, Partnerships and Pedagogies

Co-Creating the Future: A Learning Design Team's Journey Fostering Institutional Change

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Establishing a new learning design team at an offshore Australian institution in Vietnam midst the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges. Lingering dissatisfaction with emergency remote teaching which primarily involved moving face to face teaching to online webinars (Turnbull, Chugh, & Luck, 2021) and limited exposure to intentional blended approaches (Maheshwari 2021; Le, Allen, & Johnson, 2022; Pham, Lai, & Nguyen, 2021) within the traditional, teacher-centered educational landscape of Vietnam (Pham & Ho, 2020; Yao & Collins, 2019) made this an extremely challenging task. This pecha-kucha documents our experiences establishing a learning design team and implementing a blended learning approach within this challenging context.

Facing the challenge of generating interest and changing practice, we began in 2021, with one newly recruited learning designer and three early adopter faculty by using an iterative co-design model to support a participatory, collaborative approach to enhancing the overall learning experience (Huber & Jacka 2022; Wilson, Huber, & Bryant, 2021). This approach allowed us to support faculty professional development, establish design patterns, implement new asynchronous, interactive, social tools, and build knowledge about blended and online approaches, moving faculty away from the existing teacher dependent model (Pham, Lai, & Nguyen, 2021) with LMS as repository (Pham & Ho, 2020; Washington, 2019) to designing active, purposeful learning sequences connecting asynchronous and synchronous learning.

These three initial courses were used to showcase our approach to senior stakeholders and secure buy in. Within one year, as positive word of mouth spread, demand for our services grew exponentially, to over 70 blended courses. As a direct result of this popularity, meeting each school's needs required tailoring support to scale up as well as expanding our team from 1 to 8 members. However, limited local expertise created hurdles amidst exponential demand, needing extensive on-the-job training and creative resourcing (Heggart & Dickson-Deane, 2022).

While early generic workshops designed to address scale generated interest, they lacked practical relevance. Developing tailored support offerings addressed the specific needs of schools and programs and facilitated meeting the increased demand. Our ongoing codesign relationships with academics were crucial for moving academics to a more student-centered blended model with students taking more ownership of learning (Davis & Fill, 2007).

As a complement and key focal point, we created a multipurpose Canvas site showcasing our design principles, tools, and sample modules from exemplar courses. This self-paced resource engaged stakeholders on their own terms, sparking interest while concurrently educating new learning designers and academics. We leveraged the site for showcase sessions, consultations, and events, updating it regularly to highlight approaches and design principles identified by the team as requiring extra support and attention.

Through codesign relationships, exemplars showcasing value and tailored support, the learning design team successfully created awareness and enthusiasm to drive institutional change (McInnes, Aitchison, & Sloot, 2020, Taylor & Newton, 2013) toward an active, learner-centered blended approach. In this presentation, we will share specific strategies, tools, and lessons learned that equipped our team to foster stakeholder buy-in and scale up effectively. By documenting critical experiences and insights from our journey establishing awareness amidst obstacles, we aim to inspire innovative solutions so that others may successfully implement learner-centered pedagogies at their institutions under challenging conditions.

Keywords: Learning design, Institutional change, Codesign, Blended learning, Vietnam

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