

Project Summary for IAL Website

The following information is for publication on the IAL website. Please be reminded not to include any confidential information.

Project Title:	Examining the Implementation of Practice-based Work Approach for the Professional Learning of Associate Faculty
Project Number:	GA21-01
Year of Approval:	2022
Funding Source:	WDARF
Objectives and intended outcomes of the project:	<p>Objective: Examine the design of a practice-based learning approach in two graduate certificate courses aimed at building up the SUSS’s teaching and learning capacity of Associate Faculty (AF)</p> <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A model of Practice-based Work for professional development of educators of higher learning (2) Capacity building of associate faculty, head of programmes, course supervisors and research personnel (3) Publication and sharing with the research and IHL community
Project Team	
Principal Investigator:	Associate Professor Jennifer Yeo
Summary of Project (up to 300 words)	
<p>This study aims to examine the design of a practice-based learning approach in two graduate certificate courses aimed at building up the teaching and learning capacity of Associate Faculty (AF). AF are the professionals in the industry who teach part-time in institutes of higher learning and/or academies. A practice-based work (PbW) model was adopted to overcome the often missing theory- practice nexus in the traditional sequence of learn-then-apply process of professional learning. PbW, which is based on Barrow’s Problem-based Learning and best practices of teacher professional development is characterised by three key features: (1) situate learning in solving real-world problem that reflects the complexity of the learners’ actual professional practice, (2) provide a supportive environment (including conceptual, social, cognitive supports) that challenges learners’ thinking, and (3) engage learners in reflective practices that develop professional and self- knowledge. A cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) is taken as the theoretical lens for making sense of professional learning and work of AF. We further take the view that the negotiation to address the different expectations of work and study would generate new pedagogical change and innovation. As a novel professional learning model for AF, we seek to find out: (1) what is the extent of professional learning in terms of changes in pedagogical understanding, practices and innovation, and (2) what are the factors in the design of PbW that mediate or hinder the AF’s professional learning, and how? We employ design research methodology to address these research questions so that the findings of one research cycle can inform the refinement in course design of the next iteration of the course implementation.</p>	

Summary of Project Findings, Deliverables and Impacts (up to 500 words)**Key research findings (500 words):**

This study found that practice-based work (PbW) approach supported varying levels of learning among participants. Using Bateson's level of learning (1972), six participants demonstrated Level I learning (acquisition of pedagogical knowledge), four achieved Level II learning (adaptation of knowledge to context), and one demonstrated Level III learning, indicating a shift in teaching knowledge, beliefs and practices. The findings suggest that PbW not only enhanced participants' conceptual understanding of pedagogical knowledge and curriculum design, but also encouraged them to question their own existing teaching practices, rethink their underlying beliefs, adapt pedagogical strategies to new contexts, and develop transformative approaches to teaching and learning (Beattie et.al., 1997 and Howie & Bagnall, 2012).

Based on CHAT, the study identified several mediating factors within the Practice-based Work (PbW) design that supported the professional of AF. Key mediating factors included curated course content and weekly learning activities, consultation sessions, authentic implementation phase, and support from the learning community comprising course supervisors (CS), employer mentors (EM) and peer learners. These elements provided pedagogical knowledge, encouraged reflection and dialogue, supported contextual adaptation of teaching strategies, and enabled AF to test and refine their pedagogical solutions within authentic teaching and workplace contexts.

The study also identified several hindrance factors that constrained the extent of AF's professional learning. Institutional norms and programme regulations limited flexibility in the AF in making changes to their curriculum design and teaching practices. In some cases, the expert roles of CS and EM reduced AF's agency by encouraging passive acceptance of ready-made solutions rather than critical reflection and independent problem-solving. Additionally, AF's disposition, such as passive engagement or focused primarily on course completion and certification, constrained their learning.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing discourse on professional learning of AF in higher education by highlighting the need for contextually grounded and practice-oriented approaches that have the potential to achieve transformative learning.

Deliverables and Impact**A. Conference presentations:**

1. Paper presentation: A paper titled "Examining Personalised Learning in a Work-Study Arrangement in a Tertiary Setting" is presented as part of a four-paper colloquium "Designing Personalised Learning for Adult Learners in the Higher Education Setting" was presented on 10 July 2024 at the Thirty-First International Conference on Learning, Utrecht, Netherlands.
2. Invited paper presentation: An invited paper titled "Learning at the intersection: Expansive learning through work-study integration" was presented at the SUSS SoTL Symposium 2024, 26 Nov 2024.
3. Invited symposium: Paper titled "Learning Through the Boundary of Work and Study" presented under the symposium *Shaping Education Through Innovation: Voices from*
4. *Singapore* at the WERA Focal Meeting 2025, Joao Pessoa, Brazil on 30 October 2025.

B. Translation to Graduate Diploma in Curriculum and Teaching (GDCT) as part of SUSS' new MEd programme

The practice-based work is adopted as the learning approach for the newly launch GDCT in the SUSS' new MEd programme.