

Title: Knowledge Building in Professional Development - Supporting Learning Organizations

Authors/Institution/e-mail address: Kim Jensen/OISE/kim.jensen@utoronto.ca

My Authentic Challenge:

Taking Charge at the Highest Level = A Point of Leverage for Engaging Knowledge Building and Designs for Professional Development

Utilizing Knowledge Building [KB] principles to support the facilitation of professional learning has engaged teachers as active learners and partners in professional learning. Setting conditions founded on the KB principle of “*Epistemic Agency--taking charge at the highest levels*” engages teachers to reflect and direct professional learning and focus knowledge building on key issues that are meaningful to their context and students.

Major Goals: Empower Teachers’ Learning Through Epistemic Agency

- Embed KB principles into a professional learning model to build teachers’ comfort and skill as KB learners
- Explore KB as tool to support multi-layers in a school system because education systems need transformation that truly engages active learning and promotes critical thinkers
- Spark student ownership and agency through KB principles embedded in guided teacher inquiries
- Investigate if engaging student agency would be an advantageous entry point to “sell” or “scale out” (Riddell & Moore, 2015) KB to today’s educators

Promising Practices:

Setting professional learning conditions that require teachers to “take charge” is proving to be a positive leverage to support change in practice (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016). With minimal theoretical study for participants, an effective coaching stance is to set professional learning parameters that begin with teachers identifying and honing “top-goals”. Coaching from a collaborative inquiry stance values teachers as “producers and disseminators of knowledge” (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016 p4). Once a “top goal” is identified, with guidance from a facilitator skilled in Knowledge Building theory, teachers “take charge”. This sparks *epistemic agency* for the teacher-learner, which is enhanced through *Knowledge Building discourse*. Dialogue connected to tracking impact on desired student outcomes/impact supports metacognitive reflection or “*surpassing ourselves*” as teachers share knowledge and can articulate clear links between deliberate choice and impact on set goals. Teacher discourse builds *idea diversity* that aids in design thinking applied to the *authentic problems* identified as their top goals.

Advances and Challenges:

Advances:

- KB is an effective stance for professional learning, leveraging “top-level” goals and “epistemic agency”
- Principals, VPs & teachers, have demonstrated the ability to set and track impactful top-level goals
- Teachers are attracted to promoting *epistemic agency* for students; it is proving to be an attractive entry point as evidenced by teacher-driven PLC foci

Challenges:

- Requires confidence & significant knowledge base of facilitator
- *Democratizing knowledge* in large school systems, often dominated by transmissive knowledge practices, requires multi-layer implementation strategies to bring KB to scale & move to “learning” organizations
- KB principles require educators to be open to risk and engage in the complexity of principles as learner and teacher

Reflections and Next best move:

- Pilot KB professional learning methods with colleagues
- Engage in continued research of shift from teaching to learning to thinking and bringing KB to scale

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