Key Strategies to Enhance Students’ Experiences of Threshold Capability Development with Intensive Mode Teaching

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Introduction

With intensive mode teaching (IMT), classes are held on fewer days and longer each day than is traditional in the discipline. IMT is supported by advances in technology that allow information delivery, and learning and assessment online, freeing class-time for interactive learning activities focusing on the most critical and troublesome parts of the curriculum, namely threshold capabilities, explained below. Flexibility offered by IMT is becoming increasingly important for students undertaking higher education, who now engage more heavily than in the past in paid employment. IMT has appeal to educators, allowing them time to focus on other demands and IMT is used by many universities offering offshore programs. Davies (2006) reported that IMT has been used by most Australian business schools on and offshore. In this context, it is important that educators know how to optimize students’ learning with IMT.

Threshold concepts are transformative for students because they open new ways of thinking and knowing. They are usually troublesome for students and require attention from students and educators. With threshold capabilities students can apply understanding of threshold concepts to previously unseen problems (Baillie, Bowden, & Meyer, 2013). Threshold capabilities are necessary for future learning or practice in a discipline. By identifying the threshold capabilities in a program it is possible to focus the curriculum, and especially class-time, on the most critical learning.

This workshop is based on key recommendations emerging from a national project to enhance students’ experiences of threshold capability development with IMT. The project has included a national sector-wide survey of coordinators of units with IMT and studies of students experiences and pedagogical approaches in eight IMT units and three matched units taught in traditional mode.

Objectives of the Workshop

Participants will learn about key strategies that students and unit coordinators have reported to enhance students’ experiences of threshold capability development in units with IMT. The important feature of these strategies is what they encourage and support students to do rather than what the teacher does. For example, one strategy is to encourage students to prepare for class. Approaches to achieve this include individual and group readiness assurance tests, and randomly selecting students to give mini-lectures in class. A second strategy is to encourage students to learn from each other. Approaches to achieve this include interactive group activities and developing an environment such that the students are expected to perform as members of one company achieving the best outcome together.
Workshop Format

1. Facilitator and participants will introduce themselves including experience with or interest in intensive mode teaching (5 minutes)
2. The lead facilitator will introduce threshold capability theory (5 minutes)
3. The lead facilitator will identify key strategies to enhance threshold capability development with IMT and participants will break into groups according to the strategy they would like to discuss (5 minutes)
4. Each group of participants will discuss one strategy, including:
   i. an example described by the group facilitator
   ii. other examples that the participants might have experienced
   iii. challenges to introducing the strategy
   iv. steps to ensure its success
   v. possible methods of evaluation
   The group facilitators will be project team members with strong familiarity with IMT and the strategies discussed. (20 minutes for group discussions)
5. Groups reports and plenary discussion (20 minutes)

Facilities Required

Preferably café style room layout. We will need butchers paper but can bring this if we know it will not be supplied.

Maximum Number of Participants

Ideally not more than 30

Intended Audience

People who are using or are interested in using intensive mode teaching, academic developers, and curriculum designers would benefit from this workshop. Even those who are not using intensive mode teaching are likely to find that the strategies could be used in other modes of teaching.

Previous Presentations

The workshop itself has not been previously presented. However findings were presented in brief at HERDSA 2015; a UWA Engineering, Computing and Mathematics, Faculty Academy for Scholarship in Education Seminar; and the 2015 WAND Sharing Day. The following refereed paper will be presented in December 2015 Male, S. A., Baillie, C., Alam, F., Crispin, S., Hancock, P., Harte, D., . . . Ranmuthugala, D. (accepted with minor revisions for 2015). Student Experiences of Threshold Capability Development in an Engineering Unit with Intensive Mode. Paper presented at the Australasian Association for Engineering Education Conference, Geelong, Victoria.

Project Website: http://www.ecm.uwa.edu.au/staff/learning/research/intensive-mode-teaching
**Presenters**

The presenters are members of the project team for the project ‘Student Experiences of Threshold Capability Development with Intensive Mode Teaching’. All are employed at The University of Western Australia (UWA). Sally Male leads the project. Caroline Baillie is the Chair in Engineering Education and teaches with intensive mode. Phil Hancock is the Associate Dean Teaching and Learning in the Business School and teaches with intensive mode. Jeremy Leggoe leads the CEED Program which engages students in research for industry, and he teaches with intensive mode. Cara MacNish is Chair of Academic Board and former Deputy Dean Academic in the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics.

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**References**
