Evolving as a Digital Scholar

Published by Leuven University Press

Evolving as a Digital Scholar: Teaching and Researching in a Digital World.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/97952

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=3038662
7
Professional Development Approaches for Digital Scholars: Taking ownership of your professional learning

Sonja Strydom

In this chapter we focus on
- An overview of the general practices associated with continuous professional development in the context of an evolving digital scholar.
- Three dimensions of continuous professional development.
- An overview of the different aspects that could potentially impact decisions to engage with continuous professional development.
- Different ways in which we can demonstrate our learning through critical reflection and the use of digital portfolios.

Keywords: Affordances; e-portfolios; knowledge; motivation; self-directed learning; self-regulated learning; professional development

7.1 Introduction

Engagement with digital technology, and then specifically digital scholarship, is an ongoing journey which cannot be limited to once-off or reductionist approaches that only focus on the use of digital tools in scholarly work. Due to the ever-evolving nature of digital technologies, we who acquaint ourselves with it need to understand that this is an ongoing commitment of exploration, critical selection, learning and evaluation. As can be expected, the nature of the digital world will then inevitably have an impact on the choices we make in terms of professional learning and the manner in which we choose to manage our learning opportunities. There are various factors, however, that we should consider and that could potentially inhibit us from continuously engaging with digitally related professional development. Factors could include limited resources, attitudes towards personal growth and learning, psychological factors or structural limitations, to name just a few.

Also, the manner in which we situate professional development of digital scholars could be at various levels, for example at an individual level, a
group level or a departmental/faculty level. For the purpose of this chapter, the focus will remain mainly on ourselves at the individual level. In understanding how we, or then the ‘agent’, have influence on choices and approaches adopted in the professional learning process, the chapter offers a theoretical perspective that argues for an awareness of human agency and its related motivational factors. Building on agency and motivation, I argue that our actions, as displayed via self-directed and self-regulated learning, could guide us in the choices we make in relation to professional learning as digital scholars. Finally, I guide your attention to the practices linked with different types of e-portfolios and the notion of reflection to lead us in future initiatives and applying our newly acquired knowledge.

7.2 Continuous professional development

One of the key learnings in especially the field of educational technology is that learning never stops. Surrounded by a world of ever-evolving digital devices, new approaches to learning, increasingly sophisticated hardware and software and the fourth industrial revolution, there will always be opportunity to increase our knowledge and understanding of the digital world. Such a dynamic context, therefore, asks of us to be cognisant of the embeddedness of continuous professional development as part and parcel of our ‘armour’ as digital scholars.

The literature often uses different terms interchangeably to communicate our quest for further learning and development. Such terminology could include ‘academic development’, ‘educational development’, ‘staff development’, ‘staff training’, ‘professional development’ and so forth (Clegg, 2009). The aim of this chapter is not to delineate these concepts, nor to attempt to uncover the semantic differences of each. Rather, I mention these terms to sensitise you towards the realisation that digital scholars should continuously engage in further learning initiatives – irrespective of the terminology used for the endeavour of broadening and applying our knowledge of digital technologies. For the purpose of this chapter, I will be referring to ‘continuous professional development’ (CPD) to underline the embedded nature of further growth and knowledge in the field of educational technology.

Identifying potential areas of further knowledge development can be daunting. This is even more so the case in a digital world since tools and practices change regularly. I suggest that we critically consider our professional development trajectory. In the next section, I will be focusing on three potential levels of professional development (see Table 7.1).
One way of starting our professional development journey is to ensure that we have a solid overview of the tools and approaches currently available. Such a focus could, for instance, further develop our technical knowledge related to the different digital tools. It will be at this level that we have to decide for ourselves which tools are most appropriate for our particular contextual needs. If we are engaged in education, the next level outcome could, for instance, be to further enhance our pedagogical knowledge and its application with digital technologies. At this level we can, for example, critically consider the teaching philosophies we hold and how we believe learning takes place. Through such self-reflective practices, we will then potentially be better positioned to apply our digital knowledge to our pedagogical knowledge. The final level could consist of looking forward to and further planning of our professional development, since we argued that we would likely need to commit to a continuous view of learning in a digital world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three dimensions of continuous professional development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> Gaining insight and understanding into the myriad tools and approaches related to digital technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> Considering pedagogical approaches associated with digital technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> Identifying and assessing potential avenues for further learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1: Three dimensions of continuous professional development as a digital scholar.

7.2.1 Digital knowledge: Digital tools and their affordances
The evolution of the world wide web also contributes to the growth of different online tools and other related products to serve users. Web 1.0 focused on the delivery of content where read-only interaction was required. Web 2.0, on the other hand, built on its predecessor and supports the development of social networks, collaboration, the creation and substitution of content and a general requirement that users become actively involved in online activities. It is with the evolution of Web 3.0 that we will be able to make meaning of large data sets where it will provide opportunity for machines to communicate the data into comprehensible formats to users (Miranda, Isaias, Costa, & Pifano, 2017). As we can expect, these changes will have an
impact over time on the manner in which we approach our digital scholarship. The affordances associated with the web, as it evolves over time, will influence the way we approach teaching and learning, the manner in which we expect students to engage with digital learning approaches and devices, and also the methods we consider in our own personal practices.

The effect and use of Web 2.0 are still prevalent in our daily practices and are still relevant in, for instance, the educational sphere. Many of us are still in our infancy shoes when engaging with digital technologies. Therefore, it is important that we have an overview of the available online tools and how they could be aligned with learning and teaching practices. Bower and Torrington (2020) developed a useful typology of accessible online tools (see Figure 7.1) that could be used in educational practices. I share this typology with you to guide you towards your own identification of the aspects that you need further training and development in. The typology demonstrates the necessity to gain an overview of what is available and then to make informed decisions about how and where you would like to gain further
knowledge and experience in these approaches and tools. The criteria that the authors used were as follows:

✓ It should be free and not only for a trial version.
✓ The tools should be accessible via the use of a web-browser.
✓ The tools should provide users with the opportunity to collaborate and share content.
✓ It should be appropriate for educational purposes (Bower & Torrington, 2020, p. 3).

The different collections and their affordances are outlined in the next table (Table 7.2). This typology could assist us in determining the area of further development as well as its associated applications in our teaching and learning, or professional practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Free web-based learning technologies</th>
<th>Affordances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text based tools</td>
<td>Synchronous text discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note-taking and document creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image based tools</td>
<td>Image sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image creation and editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing and painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online whiteboarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diagramming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mind mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word clouds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio tools</td>
<td>Audio sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audio creation and editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video tools</td>
<td>Video sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video creation and editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video streaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimodal production tools</td>
<td>Digital pinboards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesson authoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital storytelling tools</td>
<td>Online book creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comic strip creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animated videos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evolving as a Digital Scholar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website creation tools</th>
<th>Individual website creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wikis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge organisation and sharing tools</th>
<th>File sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social bookmarking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggregators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timeline creators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data analysis tools</th>
<th>Conducting surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online spreadsheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infographics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3D Modelling tools</th>
<th>3D repositories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3D model creation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Management Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web-conferencing tools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2: Free web-based learning technologies: Typology collections (Bower & Torrington, 2020, p.3-12).

7.2.2 Pedagogical knowledge: Pedagogical approaches associated with digital technologies

Digital knowledge is only one aspect that we need to continuously develop. If we are engaged in education, the next step is to ensure that we are able to align our digital knowledge with the manner in which we approach teaching and learning. This topic, however, does not enjoy much prominence in the literature and is often segmented in terms of a focus on a specific tool and its associated learning activity. When we think about CPD and aligning our knowledge of digital technologies and pedagogical knowledge, a more structured approach should be considered. In the next section I will make some suggestions of the type of questions we can ask ourselves to assist ourselves in thinking about our own professional development needs.

Firstly, I suggest that we consider the level of technology integration that we are hoping to achieve in our teaching. Are we thinking about a broad approach which implies that we need to rethink or redesign an entire module or unit of work, or will we start small with one or two interventions?
Professional Development Approaches for Digital Scholars

Level

✓ Macro level: You want to redesign your whole module or unit of work with the integration of digital technologies where appropriate. This means that you need to consider critically the different learning and assessment activities and how it aligns with your course learning outcomes.

✓ Micro level: You would like to try out one approach or a small set of tools to get started. For example, you could decide to explore the notion of increased student engagement via in-class digital responses. This would mean that you need to identify a particular online tool (e.g., Kahoot) and identify sections of the work where such an approach would be educationally appropriate.

To be able to respond to the level of technology integration, we need to have a general overview of the tools and learning approaches available to be considered. We have discussed this in the previous section related to digital tools and their affordances. There is, however, another important aspect that we need to align with our technological knowledge: our understanding of how student learning takes place. This implies that we need to ensure that we have a good grasp of the basic learning theories associated with our cohort and how these align with digital technology use. It is only when we understand the interplay between learning and actions required by students that we will be able to seamlessly integrate tools and approaches in the chosen learning and assessment activities.

Digital tools and learning approaches

✓ Ensure that you have a general overview of the types of digital technologies available for educational purposes (see the previous section in the chapter).

✓ Select tools that you deem appropriate and confirm that you are aware of the affordances of each of these tools.

✓ Critically consider how these digital tools could be integrated into learning or assessment activities while you take cognisance of existing learning theories that you align your teaching practices with.

Upskill yourself in a working knowledge of the chosen digital tools. It is always better to understand how each of the digital tools that you consider works before encouraging your students to make use of it.
Digital skills

- Ensure that you have a working knowledge of each of the digital tools that you expect your students to be using in their course.
- Practise and test the tool before sharing it with your students.

A large part of the success of the learning intervention is also reliant on the level of support that we provide for students. This includes technical as well as educational support. In terms of technical support, it is advisable that we ensure that we have a step-by-step guide available for students to consult when they are unsure how to use a particular tool. It is also good practice to create a short demonstration video as an alternative level of support to those students who prefer a visual aid. In terms of course-related queries, clearly indicate to your students who to ask for help, when assistance will be available, and when they could expect feedback on their queries.

Figure 7.2: Teaching approaches and digital technology use.
Source: Adapted from https://teach.com/what/teachers-know/teaching-methods/
**Student support**

- Develop a step-by-step technical support guide for students combined with a short instructional video.
- Ensure that your students are aware of where to access support for course-related queries.

When you have considered the above, you will be able to plot your teaching approaches with digital technology on the plane presented in Figure 7.2. With your understanding of how learning takes place and what you expect of your students, you will be able to indicate your general activities on the y axis that suggests the extent of the different learning approaches. On the x axis, you can refer back to the level of technology integration that you are considering for your particular course or unit. This will assist you in indicating where you currently are in terms of your preferred technology use.

In relation to our professional development as digital scholars, it will be interesting to observe how we move through the different quadrants of the plane. It is not suggested that any of these planes is more preferred than another, but rather that it could serve as a reflective tool to assist you in your potential future professional learning activities.

### 7.2.3 Vehicle for further knowledge development: Exploring different avenues for learning

There are many possible avenues to consider when wanting to further your knowledge and skills. Web-based learning opportunities are growing at a steady rate and provide us with endless choices.

**Massive open online courses (MOOCs) and small private online courses (SPOCs)** could be a consideration if you are thinking about a more structured learning opportunity where you have the option to obtain formal recognition for your learning. Academics, experts and even non-experts have a wide range of courses to choose from. Some of the well-known service providers of these courses include Coursera, LinkedIn Learning and Udemy. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, you will also need to take ownership of obtaining as much information as possible about the courses and topics available before you make a choice. For instance, would you like to pay for the course, or are you looking for free learning opportunities? What about qualifications or types of certificates? Do you need a certificate of participation or completion of a course? Be aware that in many cases you would need to pay for a certificate of recognition.
Some examples of different levels of recognition that you can expect:

- No certificate
- No certificate, only open badges
- Only open badges and a paid verified certificate
- Open badges and a fee certificate that serves as a statement of accomplishment
- A formal record of achievement and/or a digital badge
- A free certificate that states your accomplishment
- A free certificate or a verified certificate
- A paid statement of participation

**Table 7.3: Types of recognition in online courses**
(Source: https://www.mooc-list.com/types-of-certificates)

Colorado State University (2014) provides a useful beginner’s guide to free online courses which might be of benefit to you if you are not familiar with all the possibilities available.62

If you are not looking for a structured learning opportunity, you might consider webinars, where institutions or individuals offer short learning or discussion opportunities based on a particular topic. These learning opportunities afford us the opportunity not to commit to a long-term learning intervention and also possibly to engage with like-minded individuals also participating in the webinar. These sessions are often also a good platform to build professional networks.

Additionally, you could also sign up for particular subscriptions where you will receive regular updates and news in your inbox. These opportunities are mostly based on enrichment or broadening our knowledge in a particular field, but could also serve as a platform to advertise upcoming courses, webinars or conferences that might be of interest.

From an institutional perspective, you always have the opportunity to sign up for formalised institutional initiatives which provide you with the opportunity to build knowledge on topics that are prioritised by your institution. In this case, topics will usually be aligned with institutional goals or directives where we could directly feed newly acquired knowledge and skills back into our department or community of professionals. In some cases, such initiatives could be formal accredited short courses or one-day sessions where you receive relevant information in digestible chunks.
7.3  Aspects associated with digital technology use

There are a wide range of factors impacting whether we will choose to engage with continuous professional development as digital scholars. Such factors could be complex, multifaceted and context-specific.

Figure 7.3: Understanding professional learning in preparation for sustainable digital scholarship and development

In this next section I will draw your attention to some of these aspects and how they relate to the choices we make in terms of continuous professional development. Firstly, I will provide you with an overview of the role and nature of agency and our perceived levels of self-efficacy and how this could impact our actions towards professional development. I will also provide you with a short overview of the role of motivational factors. Secondly, I will briefly focus your attention on the importance of self-directed and self-regulated learning. The section will provide you with an overview of these concepts and how it affects our choices in terms of professional development. Lastly, the section will conclude with highlighting some practices on how you could apply your newly acquired knowledge by means of reflective practices and the use of an e-portfolio system.

7.3.1  Human factors related to continuous professional development choices

Figure 7.3.1: Understanding professional learning in preparation for sustainable digital scholarship and development: Human factors.

7.3.1.1  Role of agency

Agency relates to the fact that humans act with purpose, are proactive and are in control of their chosen actions and motivation (Bandura & Locke,
Most of us are aware of agency at an individual level. However, according to the social-cognitive theory, there are three types of agency, namely personal, proxy and collective. The literature tends to focus on individual agency and how cognitive, motivational and social factors impact such actions. Sometimes, individuals do not have influence over their institutional circumstances or broader social context. In such a case we could adopt proxy agency where we rely on other individuals that do have the perceived influence or expertise to represent us. Collective agency, on the other hand, places influence in the hands of a particular group (Bandura, 2000). The importance of understanding the different levels of agency lies in our approach to professional development and our own learning. We could see our journey as digital scholars as an individual pursuit where we act in isolation and our own needs. Contrary to this, it might be that you are working in an environment where you need to convince others of the importance of digital scholarship and learning. It is in such circumstances that proxy agency could be of relevance. And, lastly, collective agency could be of value in any circumstances where you function as part of a group. It could be departmental team, working with teaching colleagues, or even professionals working together on one particular project. The influence as a group can then become of value in considering and approaching different learning opportunities as digital scholars.

7.3.1.2 Motivational explanations

Different motivational factors could impact our actions towards continuous professional development as digital scholars. Such factors could include those things that we need, what we expect as well as the way in which we think about further learning practices. In the following section I provide a short overview of some of these factors and how they could potentially relate to the choices we make in terms of our own learning.

Our responses towards our agentic choices are often rooted in our perceived level of self-efficacy. A lot of our human behaviour is influenced by our thoughts about future success or the possibility of attaining our identified goals. The ways in which we think about potential success or goal attainment have an impact on our perceived self-efficacy. Those of us that display high levels of self-efficacy will visualise success and the ability to reach set goals. Low self-efficacy levels, on the other hand, persuade us to anticipate limited levels of success and potential failure (Bandura, 1993). The manner in which these psychological thought processes impact our beliefs about continuous professional learning – specifically in the field of digital technologies – will possibly also contribute to the way we approach our own learning goals.
Those of us that display lower levels of self-efficacy can potentially think that it is unlikely that we will be able to master certain tools, device usage or even methods associated with digital technologies, and will be hesitant to approach the continuous learning journey with a ‘can do’ attitude. Our self-efficacy beliefs are based on a complex combination of motivational, cognitive, affective and personal decision procedures that impact our chosen actions (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Say, for instance, you are considering enrolling for an online course – your perceived level of self-efficacy could influence whether you will decide to spend the time and energy as part of your professional development. If you have high levels of self-efficacy, you will believe that you can be successful and that you are able to reach the goals you’ve set out for yourself in terms of the course or your general professional development.

The expectancy-value theory also provides us with insights into our motivation to engage with CPD. According to this theoretical perspective, your expectations as well as the value you ascribe to achieving your goal will impact your actions. In other words, this theory highlights your perceptions about how well you can complete a particular task or activity and the rationale for wanting to complete the activity – the value you place on the activity (Panchal, Adesope, & Malak, 2012; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Our expectancies, needs and values all contribute to the complex processes of deciding to engage with continuous professional development or not. This could be explained as follows:

Motivation = Perceived probability of success in a task x subject task value (Panchal et al., 2012).

If we draw on our example of enrolment in the online course, your perceived probability of completing the online course will be one of the factors determining your choice to participate. If you do think that the course is too difficult or that there are other possible reasons why you will not be able to complete it, your perceived level of success will be low. Similarly, if success in the completion of the course is of particular value to you based on, for instance, promotion or being able to apply your newly acquired knowledge in a teaching and learning context, your motivational levels to enrol for such a course will be higher than if you thought the course was of no outstanding value to you.

Another possible explanation could be the manner in which our actions and beliefs of success could be closely aligned with our particular needs. According to the achievement motivation theory, we are motivated to act based on our need for achievement, need for power and need for affiliation. This is called the achievement motivation theory (Moore, Grabsch, & Rot-
ter, 2010). McClelland (1961) posits that a need for achievement showcases our need to be successful in some form of contest where we display a level of excellence. It implies that when we consider, for instance, to enrol in an online course we will be able to “accomplish something difficult, attain a high standard of success, master complex tasks, and surpass others” (Daft, 2008, as cited in Moore et al., 2010, p. 25). The need for power is often displayed as a way by which we would like to display a level of authority by wanting to lead and demonstrate influence (Moore et al., 2010). Lastly, our need for affiliation (McClelland, 1961) implies that we value close relationships or interaction with other people. In relation to our example of participation in an online course, it could, for instance, imply that we will consider enrolling for the course if we will succeed in showcasing our newly acquired expertise (i.e., need for power) and that we will be able to participate in the course as members of a group of scholars or peers (i.e., need for affiliation). In other words, if we choose to sign up for an online course, we will probably only enrol if we are sure that we will be successful and that the course itself contributes to what we perceive as important in our quest towards continuous professional development.

These are only three possible reasons or motivational factors that could potentially influence the choices you make in relation to continuous professional development. Human motivation and action are clearly complex and multifaceted and can be influenced by a number of factors. This section aimed only to sensitise you towards some of the possible reasons.

### 7.3.2 Human action and digital technology

Apart from understanding the possible motivational factors that could influence our deliberations regarding CPD, we also need to consider the responsibility that will inevitably rest on our shoulders when we start to engage with our different initiatives. Self-directed and self-regulated learning will be of relevance during the different professional learning initiatives that we embark on, but can also be significant when we view our professional development at a meta level.

![Figure 7.3.2: Understanding professional learning in preparation for sustainable digital scholarship and development: Human action.](image-url)
7.3.2.1 Self-directed and self-regulated learning
The way in which adults learn has been a research topic for many years. There is no one model, framework or explanation to succinctly outline the processes of how and when learning takes place (Ellinger, 2004). In order for us to become lifelong learners that take responsibility for our own learning by continuously engaging with professional development, we can consider the importance of the notion and act of self-directed learning (SDL) and self-regulated learning (SRL).

SDL and SRL are often used synonymously, but do refer to two separate ways of learning (Jossberger, Brand-Grüwel, Boshuizen, & van de Wiel, 2010). Both these constructs relate the importance of being actively involved in the learning process by clarifying desired outcomes, the ability of learners to choose learning approaches that will be applicable to the context and the awareness of assessment of learning goals (Gandomkar & Sandars, 2018).

SDL could be explained as “self-learning in which learners have the primary responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their learning experiences” (Ellinger, 2004, p. 159). It means that the learner has the skill to design a learning environment that is appropriate for his or her learning needs (Saks & Leijen, 2014). This approach to learning is mostly situated at a macro level where the learner takes responsibility for developing a specific learning trajectory appropriate for the learning needs to be accomplished (Jossberger et al., 2010). The types of skills that someone will display when engaged with SDL are the ability to know what to learn next, being able to articulate the specific learning outcome, identifying the needed resources to support the learning process and to monitor the activities (Saks & Leijen, 2014). This type of learning can take place in formal or informal settings and learners can draw on the expertise of others and external resources to accomplish their goals (Ellinger, 2004).

In the context of developing as a digital scholar, SDL will imply that you adopt a specific learning approach that suits you in terms of the educational goal you would like to achieve (Gandomkar & Sandars, 2018). For instance, it might be that you’ve decided that you need to improve your knowledge and skills related to technology-augmented pedagogies. It means that you would look at your learning trajectory for an academic year and identify the different aspects needed for you to achieve such a goal. By seeing the ‘bigger picture’ at a macro level, you might decide that the first step would be to gain an overview of some of the popular pedagogies related to digital technology. Secondly, you decide that it is necessary for you to upskill yourself in terms of two new digital approaches in terms of technical training. And, lastly, you conclude that you will apply your newly acquired knowledge gained through your two previous
learning goals by applying it to a post-graduate class that you are teaching in the second semester. You choose to design your learning environment by signing up for a massive open online course (MOOC) to learn about the different pedagogical approaches associated with digital pedagogies and ask for the help of your digital technologies team in identifying possible digital tools that could assist you in your quest. Lastly, you could make use of the advice of an academic developer to help you design your learning interventions for your postgraduate teaching group. Through this process, you were able to design a specific learning trajectory appropriate for your unique learning needs.

Self-regulated learning (SRL), on the other hand, is an approach that you adopt when focusing on a clearly defined goal or task (Gandomkar & Sandars, 2018). It consists of forethought, performance and self-reflection (Beaumont, Moscrop, & Canning, 2016), and is mostly involved in the manner in which you will complete or execute a particular task (Saks & Leijen, 2014). SRL is a process where there is a clear beginning and end and where you make use of an active cycle of re-assessment and adaptation (Gandomkar & Sandars, 2018). These processes will include cognitive, motivational and metacognitive activities (Gandomkar & Sandars, 2018, p. 862).

When you have a particular task to complete, it will imply that you will first decide if the task is easy or difficult based on the nature of the task as well as your own cognitive appraisal. Secondly you will decide on the particular standards that will guide you towards the appropriate actions you would need to take to complete the task successfully. The next step would be to consider specific learning activities that will lead to the desired outcomes. You will then assess those outcomes with your own internal standards. Lastly, it might mean that your performance will also be assessed by external feedback or evaluation (Sun, Xie, & Anderman, 2018).

If we use the example of the suggested learning trajectory in the previous section, it could mean that you’ve decided to learn how to create an online video as part of a digital story (the second learning goal discussed in self-directed learning). Firstly, you will decide whether it is easy or difficult to learn how to use particular video editing software. You determine that you would like to be able to create a video with voice narration and background music, which implies that there are specific technical aspects you would need to familiarise yourself with. When considering the specific learning activities associated with the task, it could be that you need to know where to find music for the background and the factors needed to be considered when making use of narration in a video. After your efforts in combining music and voice, you will look at the product and decide, based on your own standards, if you were successful in the task or not.
7.3.3 Knowledge application: Translating learning into practice

Another aspect to consider is how we start to integrate and apply our newly acquired knowledge in our different contexts. A suggestion is to carefully consider the value of reflection and sharing your beliefs and skills in the format of a digital or e-portfolio.

Figure 7.3.3: Understanding professional learning in preparation for sustainable digital scholarship and development: Knowledge Application.

7.3.3.1 e-Portfolios and reflection

There are different ways in which we can share our professional development, teaching and learning practices or even our teaching philosophies in a discursive online space. The use of an electronic portfolio (e-portfolios) could be considered for these practices. As Pitts and Ruggirello (2012, p. 50) explain: “Viewed conceptually, e-portfolios are multimedia spaces that afford users the capacity to analyse and illustrate growth within the discourse and standards of a community. Within this discursive space the network of evidence used to illustrate growth and change is interlinked via the capacity to simultaneously illustrate and conceptualise practice over time.”

The use of portfolios is a useful tool and approach that could assist in the practice of continuous professional development, since it places emphasis on the significance of social learning and reflection (Tigelaar et al., 2009). E-portfolios could be used to demonstrate the attainment of specific attributes and skills through the processes of reflection and continuous professional development (Carl & Strydom, 2017). It is argued that “reflection and lifelong learning emphasise both the processes and skills required to continually seek, acquire, renew, and upgrade knowledge skills, competencies and attitudes” (Gordon & Campbell, 2013, p. 288).

There are different types of e-portfolios with distinct goals in mind. These usually include a demonstration of learning, to showcase a particular product of learning or to reflect on learning experiences. Different types of e-portfolios are in use with terminology often used interchangeably to explain these portfolios. For the purpose of this chapter, we will consider teaching portfolios, reflective portfolios and professional development portfolios.
Teaching portfolios originated from teacher training, where emphasis is placed on providing evidence of specific teaching experiences. The purpose of these portfolios is usually to demonstrate attributes and skills and to provide evidence for promotion or accreditation purposes. This type of portfolio typically starts with a declaration of the user’s teaching philosophy and the way in which you consider approaches to teaching and learning as well as professional development. The teaching portfolio could also be used to demonstrate alternative training routes that were followed to achieve teaching status, references to membership of professional bodies or any other postgraduate qualifications that were obtained in the light of the professional context. Different types of teaching portfolios exist. For instance, apart from the individual portfolio, course portfolios could focus on the development of one particular course. At a broader level, a departmental portfolio could be aligned with administrative, learning and/or assessment goals (Lai, Lim, & Wang, 2016).

Reflective portfolios could also form part of a teaching portfolio. For the purpose of this section, however, I will address this as a separate type of portfolio and approach. As the name suggests, these types of portfolios underline and embrace the importance of reflective writing practices by sharing personal reflections of different learning journeys or actions. Various multimedia artefacts could be used to share the different reflections. The reflective portfolio usually consists of a record of the different learning activities and the associated rationale for each. Through reflective writing techniques, the user shares responses to the learning activities and their future implications. These portfolios form the basis of a compilation of reflective activities demonstrating a specific learning journey over time.

As mentioned in the above, the practice of reflection plays a valuable part in the learning journeys of individuals. It enables us to “express ideals for better, deeper, more liberating ways of learning” (Van Woerkom, 2008, p. 3). However, the notion of reflection is often differently described in the literature (Van Woerkom, 2004), which complicates an attempt to provide you with a succinct definition or description. For instance, in the earlier explanations, Dewey (1938) argued that an emotive component was aligned with being reflective, Schön (1975) placed emphasis on the value to the institution when employees engage with reflective actions, while Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) are of the opinion that individual learning comes to the fore through reflective practices (Carl & Strydom, 2017, p. 2).

Terms which are regularly used interchangeably are reflection, critical reflection and critical thinking. Often, the differences between these terms are unclear. To complicate matters, there are many reflective models and practices in the literature, and I will not attempt to provide you with an overview, nor
to suggest one particular approach to consider. Rather, for the purpose of this section, I will briefly sensitise you towards the practice of reflection and will make suggestions how this practice could feed into your professional learning activities as a digital scholar. Despite the possible confusion and differing opinions, it becomes clear that learning is the essence of reflective practices. Attention is paid to a specific incident where opportunities are created for individuals to expand their knowledge and experience (Carl & Strydom, 2017).

Professional development portfolios are appropriate to demonstrate the development of attributes and skills associated with professional practice and personal development planning (PDP) (Ahmed & Ward, 2016). Self-directed learning principles are key to the effective and continuous use of a professional development portfolio. Usually, the professional development practices associated with the use of such a portfolio consist of an identification of the unique professional learning needs of the user, the development of a personal development plan (PDP), identifying avenues to implement the PDP and, lastly, an assessment of learning and skills acquired via reflective practices (Foucault, Vachon, Thomas, Rochette, & Giguère, 2018). The main purpose of the use of such a portfolio and learning approach is to assist the user in their individual and collective professional activities (Foucault et al., 2018). It implies that the users take responsibility for their own professional development trajectory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of portfolio</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Typical sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital teaching portfolio (DTP)</td>
<td>Teaching philosophy Share your general approach to T&amp;L and professional development Evidence of alternative approaches to achieving accreditation, membership of professional bodies or postgraduate qualifications</td>
<td>Teaching philosophy statement Evidence of teaching performance and impact Planning and preparation Student learning assessment Evidence of professional development and future plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective portfolio</td>
<td>Using various multimedia artefacts to share personal reflections on a learning journey</td>
<td>Listing of learning purposes Responses to learning activities Compilation of reflective activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic professional development portfolio (e-PDP)</td>
<td>Professional development planning (PDP) focusing on learning and development opportunities Demonstrating continuous engagement with learning activities Reflective practices associated with learning opportunities</td>
<td>Demonstration of products associated with learning Emphasis on the process of learning via retrospective reflective practices Consideration of prospective actions required for professional development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4: Different types of portfolios to demonstrate learning as a digital scholar Source: Consortium (2004); Foucault et al. (2018); Hughes & Moore (2007); Lai et al. (2016); Strivens (2007).
An important part of CPD is to have the ability to view your professional learning trajectory objectively and to demonstrate further areas for development through the processes of critical reflection. As mentioned earlier, by engaging in digital scholarship it will be possibly expected of you to adopt a flexible approach to continuous learning, based on the evolving nature of the field, its associated practices and the digital tools available.

7.4 Suggested way forward

✓ Identify the dimension of professional development (digital knowledge, pedagogical knowledge or further knowledge development) where you would like to start broadening your professional learning journey.
✓ Explore a ‘new’ digital tool that you have not used previously.
✓ Consider the use of an e-portfolio as a process or product orientated resource to showcase and reflect on your learning.

7.5 Conclusion

Embracing the digital world and growing as a digital scholar requires of us to embrace the notion of continuous professional development. It implies that we become aware of the different dimensions associated with CPD and the manner in which we choose to position an individualised learning trajectory appropriate for our own individual, scholarly or institutional needs. It is only by being aware of the aspects associated with digital use that we will start to understand our approaches to continuous learning. By identifying and being cognisant of our attitudes towards agency and motivation, the way in which we approach learning and the value placed on critical reflection and knowledge application, could pave the way for a scholarly journey of new insights, skills and attributes closely aligned with the requirements of a world filled with digital technologies and related approaches.

References


Evolving as a Digital Scholar


