LearnIT2teach

Learning Technology Innovation Leadership:

Course Evaluation & Lessons for the *Settlement Training Sector*

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A PROJECT OF

NEW LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning Technology and Innovation Leadership courses delivered online were conceived, designed and assembled in 2015 and 17. The courses have now been delivered to five cohorts of aspiring learning technology leaders in the sector (May 2018). This evaluation of the two six-unit courses aims to provide information and guidance to meet the needs of all stakeholders of the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program:

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the funder;
- The colleges, school boards and community organizations that deliver frontline training;
- The managers and teachers employed to deliver language training services;
- And the adult newcomers who seek to advance their English language and settlement skills in IRCC programs across Canada.

Beyond its mandate to develop online language training courseware for adult newcomers to Canada, and training teachers to implement the courseware in blended learning, the LearnIT2teach Project has understood the importance of recruiting and preparing language training sector leaders since its inception in January 2010. The online Learning Technology Innovation Leadership course piloted between September 2015 and January 2017 is the latest project initiative aimed at this goal.

The evaluand is the two stages of the online Learning Technology Innovation Leadership course for language program managers and lead teachers. This is a formative evaluation of the piloting of the course, but the course in question will remain a moving target as the course units are modified from study cohort to study cohort in a constant improvement and adaptation cycle.

Each of the two six-unit parts of the LTIL training is comprised of approximately 12 hours of discussions, readings, interviews and videos. The evaluation standards applied in this report are based on the learner outcomes articulated in the descriptions of the course. What follows in this Executive Summary is a description of the evaluation standards with recommendations culled from the body of this report:

STANDARD 1 Development of personal leadership skills to support learning technology innovation in an SLT program

RECOMMENDATIONS Progressive SLT professionals still encounter serious local challenges even when they do understand the role of leadership in the innovation process. Additional evidence to indicate how well this standard was achieved by participants would have been available if their plans for local innovation were more evolved by the end of the last unit of the courses. A better developed local plan should be a requirement in future iterations of the courses. For example, in future participants could be required to write and define their personal role and next steps toward meeting local blended language training challenges.

STANDARD 2 Understanding of the roles that each stakeholder (funders, managers, teachers and learners) play in successful learning technology integration

RECOMMENDATIONS Many discussion board postings reflected a high awareness of the needs and perspectives of managers, teachers and learners. The missing element was the role of funders and the need for service providers to engage with funder(s) to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities represented by better practices in learning technology, especially flexible delivery models and improve program outcomes and effectiveness.

Recommended is continued engagement with and among the participants in the course to share experiences and lessons in building innovation partnerships with funder(s). The next step is gathering 'alumni' in webinars, ongoing discussion boards (i.e. what's happened since the courses ended), and longitudinal surveys.

STANDARD 3 Understanding of the innovation process and the foundations of Innovations Theory

RECOMMENDATIONS The recommendation in Standard 2 to continue to support 'alumni' intercommunication through webinars, surveys and discussion boards to enhance understanding and skill to support the innovation process also applies to this standard. Ongoing engagement will encourage shared practice and lessons learned by reflecting experiences of the local innovation process across a range of service providers.

In addition, the course design included a requirement for a 'capstone' assignment at the end of Part 2; a rather vague requirement for the participant to provide the foundation of a plan for continued local innovation with blended learning. This assignment generated very uneven and incomplete responses. A first recommendation is to revise the Part 2, Unit 6 assignment to be more structured and specific. This assignment should also be leveraged to provide the agenda for ongoing Community of Practice discussions, including local progress reports in the months and even years following the course.

STANDARD 4 Increased awareness of theory and evidence which supports better learning technology practices in the SLT sector

RECOMMENDATIONS To expand on the case for learning technology presented in the course, more evidence is required. Evidence for LINC blended learning that exists, as reflected in the forums, is mainly anecdotal or culled from other, non-immigrant, research on modes of language training. A demonstration research project located in a service provider organization that has made the transition to LINC blended learning (Edulinc) could begin by looking at the courseware's impact on learning and teaching. Potential questions to be posed to the research could examine gains in self-efficacy, language proficiency or settlement-adaptation.

STANDARD 5 Understanding of core persuasion and leadership strategies to support learning technology innovation within the participant's organization

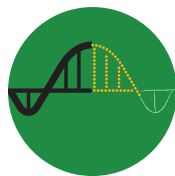**RECOMMENDATIONS** Participation in the course by sector professionals was voluntary, and we can surmise that they self-selected as technology innovators. Most had already taken steps locally in their programs to implement blended learning. Rogers research posits an organizational S-curve to describe the rate of adoption for an innovation, typically beginning with an initial adoption by a few individuals, and progressing toward the final innovation stage when just a few outliers eventually adopt. In the LTIL training, participants' local innovation projects were all past the initial stage but otherwise, each of their innovation instances was unique in terms of the barriers and opportunities it faced (Rogers, 2005, p.23). The survey and discussion board data indicate positive thoughtful responses to the readings on leadership in the course. For greater certainty under this standard and others, a scale that encouraged participants to rate and comment for each reading, podcast or video in the course would provide additional data to assess the impact of the curricula.

STANDARD 6 Awareness of the role program evaluation and effective communication can play in supporting local learning technology innovation

RECOMMENDATIONS Evaluation questions were specific to the latter units of the training, mainly the final unit of Part 2. Beginning the evaluation discussion earlier in the course and threading it through earlier units is a recommendation.

STANDARD 7 Articulation of a plan for local learning technology innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS All participants were actively engaged in the courses in discussing and sharing planning. However, a more structured capstone assignment requiring development of the broad elements of a local plan for blended learning technology innovation should be a requirement of future iterations of the course.

A revised Part 2, Unit 6 assignment would be something like this:
"Address your personal role in innovation in your language training program and your response to the blended language training innovation challenge and your strategy for moving your program forward. Include your next steps to implementing blended learning in your language training program, your approach to leadership and your mid and longer term strategy for implementation and ongoing evaluation."

STANDARD 8 Ongoing engagement in an online community of settlement language training practitioners.

RECOMMENDATIONS The project should encourage all alumni to engage in an ongoing Community of Practice by creating further opportunities to share goals, plans, challenges, barriers and opportunities for blended learning innovation beyond the time frame of the online course.

BACKGROUND

With so much discussion of the place of information technology in learning today, perhaps nowhere is it more relevant than the settlement language training sector of adult education. Language educators are asking: What are appropriate applications of technology? How can technology serve adult newcomers? Can e-learning improve language program outcomes? Can it increase learner participation and retention in language training programs?

From an adult newcomer's point of view, how can information technology assist the immigration project? Can technology skills facilitate learning English and enable more flexible, accessible course delivery? Government funders and policymakers are asking all of these questions AND if learning technology innovation can make settlement language training more effective and efficient.
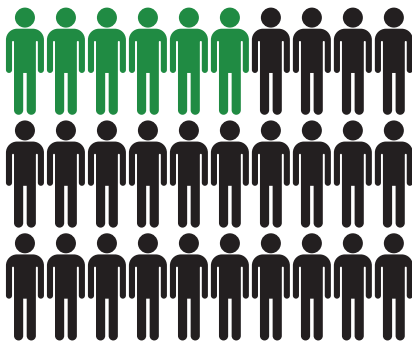
Roughly a fifth of the population of Canada is foreign-born

Immigration and the Settlement Gap

There are more than six million foreign-born people living in Canada in 2016, roughly a fifth of the population and one of the highest proportions of any country in the world. The demand for immigration is partly explained by Canada's low fertility rate. Immigration is now mainly responsible for any growth in the population (Alexander, 2009, p. 4). As Canada population ages, immigrants play a critical role in renewing the labour force.

Over the past 25 years, research has revealed an increasing time lag between the arrival of immigrants and positive economic outcomes. Labelled by some 'the settlement gap', it is characterized in a TD Bank report as, *"…a gap between earnings of newcomers and Canadian-born individuals on entering the labour market is widening. While immigrants in the past could hope to close that earnings gap with time, the ability to do so today is in question"* (Alexander, p. 3).

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Language training is one of two streams of immigrant services underwritten by provincial governments and the Government of Canada. Counselling, interpretation and social work aspects fall under the settlement services umbrella. The Province of Quebec receives funding for immigrant settlement services from the federal government but selects and settles immigrants through its own programs. For the rest of Canada, language training is divided roughly into federally funded programs for permanent residents and refugees, or provincially funded language training for foreign-born Canadian citizens.

In nine provinces, the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship funds and administers the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada or (LINC) program. Frontline delivery is through a network of about 250 contracted organizations: school boards, public colleges and non-profit community organizations. Funded at approximately $600 million per year, LINC reaches about 40,000 learners annually. LINC exists because, *"Language constitutes the most serious barrier newcomers face to furthering their education or training and among the most serious barriers to finding employment"* (LINC Evaluation Report, 2010, p. 42).

LINC is restricted to *"…landed immigrants, convention refugees, or those whose application for permanent resident status is being processed"* (Alexander, 2010, p. 14).

The focus of LINC and provincial ESL programs is broader than economy-driven language and cultural skills for employment: *"By incorporating settlement information and*

citizenship education directly into basic language training through LINC and CLIC, the Government of Canada responded to calls for a more broad and inclusive program to replace existing work-focused training for labour market entrants" (Blakely & Singh, p. 7). Recently though, the departmental pendulum appears to be swinging gently back towards language programs that emphasize preparation for employment.

In fact, IRCC's objective for the program, "has been to assist newcomers in developing the communication skills they need to better function in and contribute to all aspects of Canadian society – social, cultural, civic, and economic" (Blakely & Singh, 2012, p. 7).

Further, *"The LINC program is closely aligned with CIC priorities"* (CIC, 2010, p. 42) Indicating that it is meeting the needs of the funder-administrator of the program. Among the departmental priorities met by the program was *"successful integration of newcomers into society and promotion of Canadian citizenship"* (p. 42). *"LINC clients learn about many different aspects of working and living in Canada, with content typically focused on English for daily life, settlement/integration, Canadian civics, and employment/ English in the workplace."* (p. 36).

Separate from LINC, specialized labour-market oriented settlement language programs are funded by both the federal and provincial governments. In Ontario for example, the federal Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship funds the Occupation-specific Language Training (OSLT) program, and the provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration funds Enhanced Language Training (ELT) for newcomers needing additional language training to enter specific fields.

LINC and other similar programs attempt to promote the development of *"authentic language use, reflecting a task-based, communicative competence approach to learning"* (Blakely & Singh, p. 7). The Canadian Language Benchmarks were developed in the early 90s and updated in 2012 and provide a twelve-level taxonomy of English language skills. The benchmarks provide a scale for assessing newcomer language proficiency and are the framework for curriculum development and program delivery. The benchmarks have been further articulated in curriculum guidelines, assessment tools, lesson plans and curricula that provide additional foundation elements for the LINC program. Furthermore, LINC practitioners generally require certification in teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) by their provincial associations. In comparison to the adult literacy basic skills sector, LINC practitioners, clients and policymakers benefit from a relatively transparent, rational and well-articulated framework that shapes aspects of program delivery; such that goals should be clear and effectively implemented.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks

	STAGE 2	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
Speaking			
Listening			
Writing			
Reading			

Whereas CIC-IRCC reports indicate LINC is having a positive impact on English language skills and orientation to Canada (LINC Evaluation Report, 2010, p. 44), in reality, problems

have been identified with, 1) the effectiveness of the program, and, 2) levels of newcomer participation. Where, on the one hand, CIC has stated, *"LINC training is high quality and designed to meet the needs of students"* (p. 42), language gains are mainly in reading and writing, whereas *"…for listening and speaking, the gains were not beyond what they would have achieved from [just] living in Canada"* (p. 32). In fact, real learning gains seem to appear only when learners spend at least 1,000 hours in the program (p. 32). Surprisingly, *"LINC clients are settling well in Canada, but they are no further ahead than non-clients when it comes to certain initial settlement activities"* (p. 36).

"77% of instructors, 70% of administrators and over half the learners cited the current lack of adequate e-learning infrastructure as a barrier to ESL e-learning"

(Lawrence, 2013, p. 14).

As for problem 2), levels of newcomer participation in LINC, the program seems to score well on measures of accessibility—it is free, learner assessment and placement work well, transportation, disability and childcare assistance expand its client base, especially caregivers, multiple service providers such as colleges, school boards, and community organizations mean convenient locations (p. 22-23) —but the perception in 2012 was *"…uptake rate for LINC is low"* (p. 30). That should be qualified as relatively low. In 2016 – 17, LINC and other IRCC-funded settlement language programs provided instruction to 109,006 newcomers, an increase of 4.2% over the previous year (Government of Canada, IRCC). This increase reflects increased funding for language training since 2012, resulting in an unquantified reduction of waiting lists for training, and improved access for newcomers. Still, waiting lists persist, and many prospective learners may simply get discouraged and make do without LINC, and an unknow number may simply not seek language training at all in favour of immediate employment.

Couldn't learning technology improve learner access? Many newcomers struggle with long hours at entry-level employment, family obligations, or personal illness. Learning technology can improve language training accessibility as it enables flexible program options such as blended or online distance classes that may better match the time constraints of newcomers struggling with entry-level employment, family obligations or illness.

Albeit for a provincially run settlement language training program, pertinent information is available from an Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) sponsored study. MCI funds a very large post-citizenship language training program through provincial school boards, Adult Non-Credit ESL. The ministry study indicates very uneven access to the Internet and e-learning tools from provincial ESL program to program. Also, teacher and learner readiness to learn with technology remains an obstacle. A common problem is inadequate infrastructure; *"77% of instructors, 70% of administrators and over half the learners cited the current lack of adequate e-learning infrastructure as a barrier to ESL e-learning"* (Lawrence, 2013, p. 14). Access to learning technology is uneven from program to program: many sites lack even adequate wiring for multiple computers; other sites have state of the art laptop carts portable from class to class and hi-speed Internet. Additional barriers to learning technology are wide ranging but include, *"a lack of resources, inadequate equipment and training, and the absence of a cohesive plan"* (p. 12). The local hardware-software questions have been addressed to some extent with the emergence of Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), online courseware is now readily available for all personal devices: personal computers, smartphones or tablets. Where learners have devices and an Internet connection today, they have access to e-learning options, bypassing the need for a local computer language laboratory or even a laptop cart.
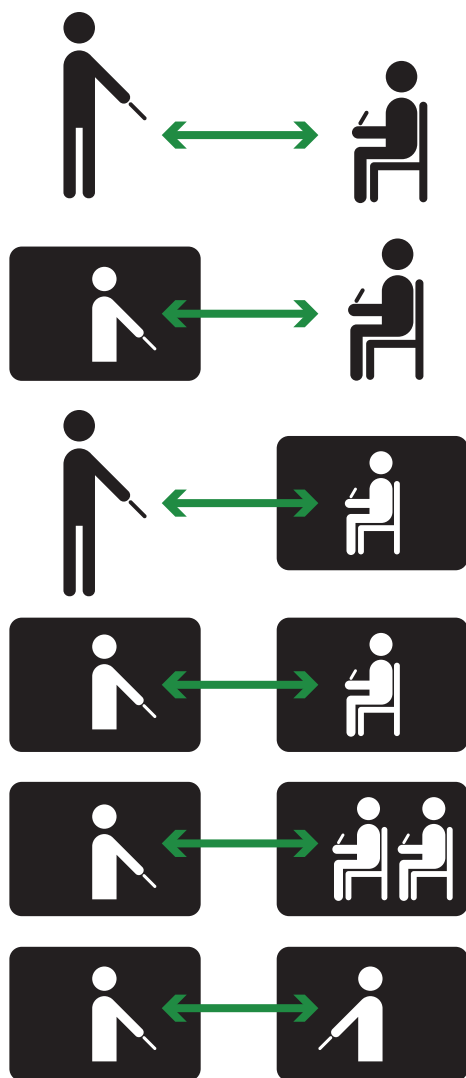
LINC Blended Learning – Edulinc

In 2007, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) contracted a research report on the potential for learning technology in CIC-funded language training programs. The resulting report, *Fast Forward: An Analysis of Online and Distance Language Training* (Kelly, Kennell, McBride & Sturm, 2008) presented arguments and evidence to support an expanded role for online learning and information technology in adult newcomer second language training.

One core argument of the report was that the emergence of the Internet and modes of device mediated communication meant that Computer-assisted language learning could evolve beyond behaviourist based drill and practice in the school's computer lab; A new learning paradigm had emerged where the face to face classroom could expand to include an online modality of device mediated communication between and among teachers and learners, and the exploration of the Internet in the relative safety of the language course as well as the benefits or more traditional CALL.

Among other specific recommendations, the report advocated the development of online learning tools based on an open-source learning management system solution, and language training 'learning objects' developed for LINC learners and released/hosted as Open Education Resources in the sector.

Projects to develop online curricula for blended learning were initiated in 2008 in the Ontario Region of the federal department. The LearnIT2teach Project was launched in January 2010 to distribute the resulting learner courseware for blended classes by hosting it in an open-source learning management system (Moodle). Through its Edulinc distributed learning site, the project has developed, updated and maintained more than 40 'starter' courses for teachers. The starter courses represent a turnkey solution to various language benchmark levels and are multi-level or level specific as required. Initially the courseware was only available to LINC and ESL teachers in the Ontario Region, but distribution and teacher training has progressively expanded to be available to LINC teachers and programs in every province and Yukon in 2018.

LearnIT2teach Teacher Training

Concurrent with development work on the Moodle language courses, and to enable and assist teachers to implement the courseware locally in blended learning, four stages of teacher training were developed in the early stages of the project, Stages 1, 2, 3, 4. Where Stage 1 is an initial 2.5 hour face-to-face introduction from the learner's perspective, followed by three online stages, all mentored by LearnIT2teach experts. To implement blended learning, just the initial 2.5 hours of Stage 2 (Pre-stage 2) are required before teachers are given a language level appropriate starter course and sufficient student Moodle accounts. The balance of Stages 2, and Stage 3 focus on enhancing course management and editing skills.
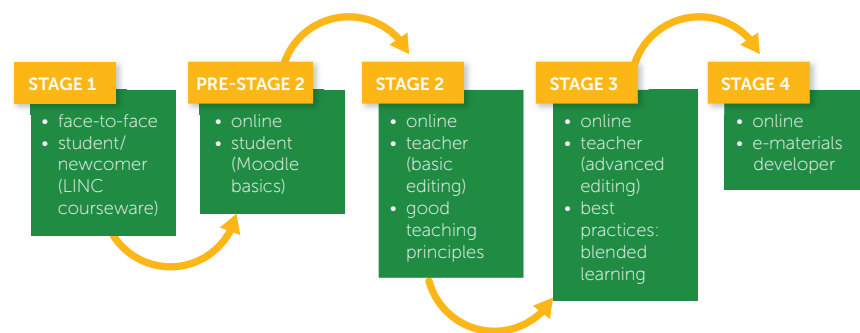
LIT2T Training Stages

Stage 4 focuses on training teachers as e-learning developers with the hope and expectation that 'graduates' will continue to build e-learning resources and share them with colleagues in the sector.

Now, eight years into the LearnIT2teach Project, evaluation evidence reflects satisfaction rates above 90% by teachers who have participated in the training stages. More than 2,500 LINC teachers have entered Stage 2 and in any given month, an average of 300+ teachers are active with the courseware. But there is a discordance between survey evidence that settlement language training professionals endorse the need for better practices in learning technology in the sector on one hand, and a nowhere near universal implementation rate of the learner courseware and teacher training.

The biggest obstacles to blended learning uptake continue to be lack of paid release time for teacher training or higher compensation for teachers who implement blended or online learning, and the lack of local technology infrastructure locally in many Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) responsible for frontline program delivery (Fahy, Fotheringham, McBride, & Sturm, M., 2016).

An additional complication is that concurrent with the launch of the LearnIT2teach Project and the Edulinc courseware, the funder department launched task-based learning and Portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA). While uptake of the Edulinc learner courseware has been mandated in a handful of SPOs by managers, PBLA has been mandated by the department for all service providers; such that local financial or human resources are often fully consumed by PBLA training and implementation. In partial response to PBLA, the LearnIT2teach Project has created resources to help teachers adapt blended learning to the special demands of a task-based learning approach and PBLA.

It's timely to pause in the report narrative and explore how Innovations Theory, particularly the research and writing of Everett M. Rogers, can inform the process of learning technology innovation in the settlement language training sector innovation in learning technology. Although Rogers cautions that, *"The average American school lags 25 years behind the best practice"* (Rogers, 2005, p.61), from his perspective, LINC blended learning innovation has one factor in its favour: the Moodle-based courseware has high potential for re-invention *"... defined as the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a use in the process of its adoption and implementation"* (Rogers, 2005, p.180). Teachers are given ready-made courses but also take control of course editing, once they understand the course editing controls, they can completely adapt and re-invent blended learning to suit their local needs. *"Adopters generally think that re-invention is a very desirable quality"* (Rogers, 2005, p185).

In the fifth edition of his work, Diffusion of Innovations, Rogers states, *"The heart of the diffusion process consists of interpersonal network exchanges and social modeling by those individuals who have already adopted an innovation to those individuals who are influenced to follow their lead"* (Rogers, 2005, p.35). The value of local influencers for innovation to succeed can't be overstated. nor can the value of communication and leadership.

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Essentially, innovation is a communications-driven process. Rogers innovation decisions on a continuum from optional (personal) decisions at one extreme, to collective ones, to authority decisions at the other extreme. As such, *"...most teachers and school administrators are involved in collective and/or authority innovation-decisions"* (Rogers, 2005, p.61). In the SLT sector, the funder has not mandated LINC blended learning, and just a few service providers have mandated it locally. Until such time as funders and managers mandate a learning technology innovation, the challenge for the LearnIT2teach Project is to encourage optional decisions, recruit local influencers and prepare them as innovators, such that local clusters of innovation may eventually draw in all faculty.
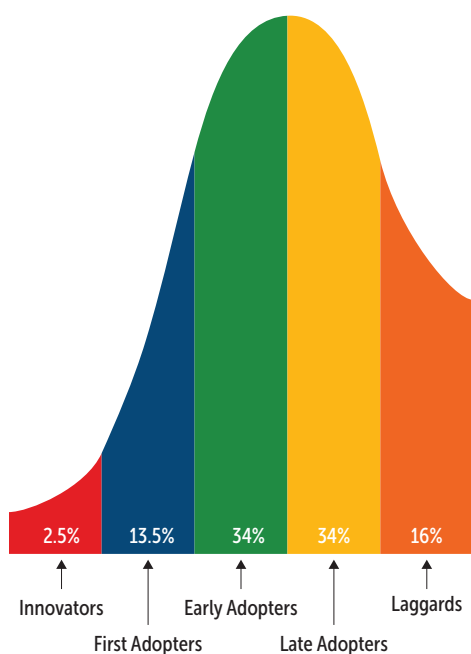
Another important Rogers-related concept is *"Relative advantage... a ratio of the expected benefits and the costs of adoption of an innovation."* (Rogers, 2005, p.233) The higher the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the higher the rate of innovation adoption. For many professionals in the sector, and for a range of reasons, the relative advantage of implementing blended LINC learning is not yet high enough to justify adoption.

Rogers notes, *"...the best single predictor of school innovativeness was educational expenditure per student"* (Rogers, 2005, p.61). Given that local technology infrastructure is a significant barrier to blended learning innovation in many SPOs, expenditure on local technology infrastructure is an important factor, but one beyond the control of the LearnIT2teach Project. However, since 2016, the project has updated the course to a new version of the learning management system (Moodle) which supports access by tablets and smartphones, enabling a student with such a device with everywhere, anytime access.

Rogers classifies the parts individual actors play in the innovation process as one of innovators, first adopters, early adopters, late adopters or laggards (Rogers, 2005, p.37). Early adopters can be considered the most influential for the success of an innovation and the project has made their recruitment to LINC blended learning a key objective since its inception. Early adopters score high on Innovativeness *"... as the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a social system"* (Rogers, 2005, p. 37). The impact of the learning technology leadership course can be judged by how well innovators and early adopters are recruited for the training, and how well they are prepared for the local leadership role.

Sector professionals have been surveyed several times by the LearnIT2teach Project and have reported the following, with implications for the project:

1. *"More teachers would take PD training if their time in PD was paid.*
2. *Unionized teachers tend to be reluctant to engage in unpaid PD. Most of the interviewees who use LearnIT2teach courseware are not unionized.*
3. *Systems are going backwards financially, with more and more demands on teachers. Teachers are willing to move with the times, but it's hard when there are obstacles at every turn.*
4. *The reality of being a teacher in other systems is that effort is recognized with moving up a pay scale. For language teachers, there often is no recognition.*
5. *Initial input of time to create course material is large. Instructors lack free time.*

There were also the familiar reports about lack of working equipment, support, and resources for PD and innovation. These reports concerned language labs (which were often shared among a large number of classes) and in-classroom computers (which were often not properly supported, were not working, did not have broadband access, or were too few in number to have an impact)." (Fahy, Fotheringham, McBride, & Sturm, 2016)

To address the challenge to innovate with learning technology in the sector, project strategies, professional development and support tools to support innovation leadership have been priorities from the inception of the project. Because of their leadership role and influence over the adoption of the learning technology innovation, and as influencers or perhaps gatekeepers over teacher training in general, an 80-page manual for program managers was developed for program administrators in 2011-12. The Administrator's Guide to Integrating & Managing Blended Learning was printed and available as a Pdf on the project web portal. The manual encompassed 11 chapters and aims to assist local learning technology innovation by providing a step by step process for assessing local needs, planning for innovation and implementing LINC blended learning (Edulinc) in local classrooms.

The print manual was also combined with a face-to-face workshop for program administrators at several conference presentations. The PD sessions emphasized to adminis-

| 2.5% | 13.5% | 34% | 34% | 16% |

Innovators

First Adopters

Early Adopters

Late Adopters

Laggards

Adopter distributions follow a bell-shaped curve over time (Rogers, 1971)

learnIT2teach

Take that first step,
and LINC blended learning will work for you.

IRCC-FUNDED PD FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS & PROGRAM MANAGERS

The Administrator's Guide to Integrating & Managing Blended Learning

trators the potential benefits of LINC courseware for learners, teachers, and programs, and administrators were asked to understand the important role they have in supporting thoughtful and effective technology use within their programs by teachers.

Learning Technology Innovation Leadership Course (LTIL)

Building on the foundation of the manual, in 2014 work began on a fifth training stage to be delivered online for sector professionals. It was initially to be aimed at managers but later broadened to include 'lead teachers'. The goal was to attract leaders as prospective innovators and early adopters and prepare them with evidence, arguments, leadership approaches and practical information to enable them to support local learning technology innovation with Edulinc blended learning.

Titled Learning Technology Innovation Leadership (LTIL), the course has two parts, each with six units. Each part was expected to take a participant 8 – 12 hours to complete, a time demand considered compatible with the demands of the training and the time available to potential participants.

Learner Profile
The targeted learners are teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) professionals currently working in the Canadian adult immigrant settlement language training (SLT) sector and wanting to lead learning technology innovation in a program management or lead teacher capacity. Most participants had already made the decision to implement LINC blended learning personally in their classrooms, or program wide in their organization, as evidenced by their decision to commit to the training and mainly stick with each part they started. In important respects, they had self-identified as innovators or early adopters by 'showing up' for the LTIL training.

LTIL Course Goals
Part 1 of the Learning Technology Innovation Leadership is a pre–requisite for Part 2.

In Part 1, SLT professionals focus on:

- Understand the key theories and evidence for Technology-enhanced language learning (TELL);
- Reflect on the needs of newcomer clients and the impact of information practices on effective settlement and integration;
- Analyze the key challenges, barriers and incentives to program integration of TELL;
- Understand the role the LearnIT2teach Project can play in the local SPO and the settlement language training sector.

In Part 2, settlement language training professionals focus on:

- developing personal leadership skills to support learning technology innovation in the participant's SLT program;
- Increasing personal knowledge of theory, evidence and better learning technology practices in the SLT sector;
- Formulating arguments and strategies to encourage and enable learning technology innovation within the local organization, and with clients and funders;
- Articulating the outline of a plan for local learning technology innovation.
- The anticipated courses outcome is enhanced local program capacity to implement the technology innovation process through:
- An increase in program options and modalities and a resulting increase in program accessibility;
- Increased satisfaction and learner retention;
- Improved language proficiency gains;
- Improved settlement information gains.

Expectations of Learners

Each of the 12 units in the two courses contains core readings, links to external readings, audio podcasts or streamed videos and at least one discussion forum. Participants can proceed at their own pace although people are encouraged to finish the six units in three months or less and in synch with their cohort. Activity completion is tracked in Moodle and certificates are issued to those completing the requirements.

The 'mentor – instructor' for the course was also the course author and participated actively in the courses, posting lead threads on the unit discussion boards as well as troubleshooting problems and providing 'nudges' to participants who were falling behind.

By April 2017, five cohorts of LINC professionals have completed Part 1 (32 participants in total) of the Learning Technology Innovation Leadership course. Three cohorts have completed Part 2 of the training (13 participants in total).

Evaluation Approach and Process

In all publications for and interactions with administrators and lead teachers in the courses, the intention was to gather information about how training outcomes could be advanced. This evaluation of the LTIL courses represents a continuation of that approach to participant evaluation.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

The sources of data for this evaluation are:

- **Qualitative:** Monitoring discussion boards for each unit and the social forums and analyzing threads and individual student comments. Forums were reviewed, pertinent quotes were collected in a Word document, then coded according to their relevance to one or more of eight evaluation standards established for the course. Often multiple codes-standards were reflected in one lengthy quote.
- **Quantitative:** 15 question survey at the end of each of the two parts of the training, each question in the surveys required a closed response but also had an open response option (survey data available on request).

Approach

The evaluand of this report is a two-part online course on learning technology innovation leadership provided to managers and aspiring lead teachers in the Canadian Settlement language training (SLT) sector. Evaluating and improving the course is central to this evaluation, but the course also constitutes a consultation with aspiring leaders in learning technology innovation in the sector. In addition to conclusions we can draw from the data about improving the course, the qualitative data represented by discussion board postings provides information on a range of issues in SLT, and provides evidence and conclusions to support learning technology better practices in the sector.

Evaluating and improving the course is central to this evaluation, but the course also constitutes a consultation with aspiring leaders in learning technology innovation in the sector.

This evaluation is formative to the extent, *"…the primary goal is to provide information for program improvement"* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2011, p. 20). However, Chen argues that persistent problems with the formative – summative distinction are indicative of its limitations and advocates two continua along which to type evaluations: process – outcome, and improvement – assessment (Chen, 1996). As the LTIL courses are dynamic and able to integrate new curricula or strategies or discard older curricula or strategies as necessary, Chen's reservation about the formative-summative model is pertinent in this ongoing dynamic course instance.

Interactive evaluation approaches of all kinds are useful in this context as they are characterized less by concern for determining outcomes through a formal 'end of program' analysis, because key stakeholders never expect their program to be constant for sufficient

time to make a traditional Impact evaluation meaningful or useful. *"Instead, program providers want evaluations which will support change and improvement"* (Owen & Rogers, 1999, p. 222).

Owen and Rogers authored much of the development of the Interactive Approach. An Interactive Approach, *"provides information about delivery or implementation of a program or about selected component elements or activities"* (Kennedy, 2005, p. 44). Other defining characteristics include support for programs *"which are constantly evolving and changing"* and *"a strong formative flavour"* (Ibid. p. 44). The Interactive evaluator *"provides findings and facilitates learning and decision-making"* (Ibid. p. 44). This evaluation's principal grounding in the qualitative information data provided by discussion board quotes also supports the application of an Interactive Approach.

Consistent with the evaluation strategy of LearnIT2teach since inception, this evaluation also aims to be participatory. *"In the Encyclopedia of Evaluation, Jean King defines participatory evaluation as 'an overarching term for any evaluation approach that involves program staff or participants actively in decision making and other activities related to the planning and implementation of evaluation studies'"* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2011, p. 199). Participant – oriented approaches implicitly encompass stakeholder involvement in every stage of the evaluation (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, p.189). Also pertinent are Fourth-Generation evaluation approaches, as typified by, *"ability to raise stakeholders' awareness of issues, to educate [stakeholders] to the views of other stakeholders, and to help them move to action"* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, p. 197).

A primary stakeholder is the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), but formerly, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (CIC), which funds and administers the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program nationally, and has funded the development of the LINC learner courseware (Edulinc), and hosting in Moodle by the LearnIT2teach Project (New Language Solutions Inc.) since the project's inception in January 2010.

An additional stakeholder is the LearnIT2teach Project which aims to actualize the principles and vision articulated in its Mission, Vision Values statement:

"A canadian newcomer population with ready access to information technology to assist their orientation and adaptation to canada, support the development of their second language skills, and help them build it foundation skills that will improve their employability and life skills.

A canadian community of professional teaching practice (cop) in the field of computer-assisted language learning (call) and immigrant settlement language training where:

- *Resources are freely shared and language educators collaborate to identify, sustain and improve best practices.*
- *Language educators understand the potential of call to support learning and teaching, and where skill with learning technology is a basic professional requirement."*

A third stakeholder is the ESL professionals who provide LINC programming and who have provided the data in this report. Perhaps the fourth stakeholder is the most important, adult immigrants, whose adaptation to English and life in Canada is at the heart of the LINC program. We can often hear those newcomer learner voices transmitted through the thoughtful forum postings by the LTIL course participants who work with them in frontline SLT delivery.

EVALUATION STANDARDS

Eight standards for evaluating the LTIL course are measuring sticks for how well the course achieved outcomes in the course description and publicity. In turn, the training outcomes aim to reflect the interests of all stakeholders in learning technology innovation in the settlement language training sector. In addition to the course survey results, the discussion boards for each of the learner cohorts were reviewed and 'mined' for postings; When a posting was pertinent to evaluation of a standard, it was collected and coded.
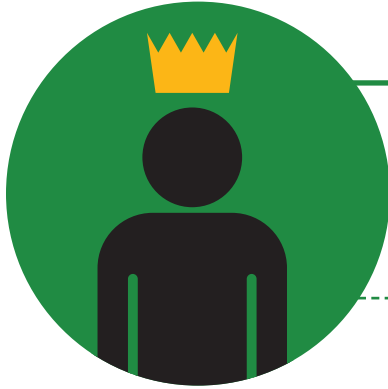
STANDARD 1 Development of personal leadership skills to support learning technology innovation in an SLT program

Judgment

Results from the Part 2 participant indicate some real success in achieving this outcome:

Q12: This course has deepened my understanding of theories of leadership and innovation and the role they play in local technology innovation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Total	Weighted Average
46.15%	46.15%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
6	6	1	0	0	13	1.62

Source: LTIL Participant Survey Data 2017

A useful posting was this comment as it indicated the readings and discussion around leadership and innovation caused reflection, and described key differences between innovators and early adopters:

"Sometimes the change agents are not necessarily the ones who are cutting edge experts and obvious innovators. Those may tend to, unwillingly, intimidate, rather than encourage an average practitioner. A change agent may be a colleague who is making small steps towards innovation him/herself, is enthusiastic about it and shares his/her successes and setbacks honestly and openly. I think the person may have a better chance to encourage peers than a recognized "pioneer" who is ahead of the crowd, and hence may be perceived as being "above".

A note of pessimism and frustration about local conditions was evident in several postings:

"I can't agree more.. While we have some great LINC teachers and administrators, we have many more who are reluctant to accept and work with new initiatives/ tools/technologies … Bad planning, limited funding, no opportunity for promotion/higher pay, all contribute to a somewhat apathetic attitude towards any change. Also, there're no repercussions for not doing a job properly. If there're cuts, they affect, unfortunately, the most recent hires who tend to be the most open-minded and eager to learn."

And a pertinent response reflecting the challenge of program evaluation:

"I agree it seems that our new hires are the ones most current and interested in technology and change. Although I think anyone can be a change agent if they have a vision and a passion. Visions and passion are the key elements that many of our long term instructors appear to be losing. There have been so many changes in technology since a great many of our instructors completed their TESL training that it can be daunting to just jump in. Some instructors attend technology workshops at TESL Ontario or TESL Toronto which is useful only if they apply what they have learned. Unless they have the passion and the resources for implementation it gets shelved."

Recommendations

Progressive minded SLT professionals still encounter serious local challenges even when they do understand the role of leadership in the innovation process. From a course evaluation perspective, additional evidence to indicate how well this standard was achieved by participants would have been available if their plans for local innovation were more evolved by the end of the last unit of the courses. A better developed local plan should be a requirement in future iterations of the courses. For example, in future participants could be required to write a response to the need to define their personal role and next steps toward meeting local blended language training challenges.

STANDARD 2 Understanding of the roles that each stakeholder (funders, managers, teachers and learners) play in successful learning technology integration

Judgment

Many comments were suggestive of ways the role a funder can play in aiding, supporting and enabling learning technology innovation. These comments were in line with conclusions drawn from survey data collected by the project from the IRCC-funded sector (Fahy, McBride, Sturm, 2016): More paid professional development, and/or higher compensation for teacher specializations; resources to support better technology infrastructure; encouragement for flexible delivery models that need to value learner time on task online as well as face to face attendance in class as valid attendance.

Otherwise, good evidence from the course participant surveys of individual appreciation of the knowledge or understanding built through the courses:

In the Part 2 exit survey 29/30 (96.67%) agreed, *"This course has improved my understanding of the barriers to technology innovation in language training programs and how to address them."* One-hundred percent agreed, *"This course has improved my understanding of the LearnIT2teach Project and the services it provides the IRCC language training sector."*

Although not representative of every individual's progress along this standard, this posting is representative of several comments that indicated real understanding of the evolving role of the teacher in the technology-enabled classroom:

"And insights into the opportunities for learners shared with peers: "Good food for thought...! The "flipped learning" becomes an opportunity to go beyond the "idea" that it is the instructors who engages in informal observations, in offering feedback, and in doing formal assessment of their learners' progress. The "flipped learning" (with the use of the available LINC courseware): 1) offers our learners more choices in how they can demonstrate what they have learners[sic]; 2) and teachers more ways of gaining insights into and monitoring their learners' progress. Also, the face-to-face classroom meetings (direct student-instructor & students-students contact) can be treated as "time/space" for real conversations between the instructor and learners as well as "time/space" where learners themselves are empowered to observe the progress of /and provide feedback to other learners, and assess their own individual learning progress."

Recommendations

Many discussion board postings reflected a high awareness of the needs and perspectives of managers, teachers and learners. The missing element was the role of funders and the need for service providers to engage with the funder to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities represented by better practices in learning technology, especially flex-

ible delivery models and improved program outcomes and effectiveness. Recommended is continued engagement with and among the participants in the course to share experiences and lessons in building innovation partnerships with the funder. A logical next step for LTIL course providers is gathering 'alumni' in webinars, ongoing discussion boards (i.e. what's happened since the courses ended?), and longitudinal surveys.

STANDARD 3 Understanding of the innovation process and the foundations of Innovations Theory

Judgment

Evidence for some achievement of this standard is presented in the responses to Question 12 of the Part 2 exit survey: In response to the statement, *"This course has deepened my understanding of theories of leadership and innovation and the role they play in local technology innovation."* only one participant of 13 disagreed:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Total	Weighted Average
46.15%	46.15%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
6	6	1	0	0	13	1.62

Source: LTIL Participant Survey Data 2017

There was frequent evidence in the forums of active planning and implementation of blended learning in their programs, often in the form of questions posed to other participants. People seemed very motivated to describe the state of learning technology in their programs and share key issues and concerns with peers about the status quo; one representative quote:

"We were fortunate to have four very early adopters who have provided advice and motivation to those who were fearful &/or reluctant. All are sessional teachers with zero paid prep time. We now have 90-95% uptake within the LINC faculty (2 full-time, unionized; 14 part-time/session/non-unionized). Demand for the program within the community has never been greater."

Another example is this posting from the Part 1, Unit 6 discussion forum:

"In the past we have offered workshops on creating blogs, making wikis, using a Smart Board and even Stage One of learnit2teach at least twice. The value of a workshop however, is only as good as to how and when the techniques are put into practice in the language classroom. Even with a traditional class, I was always pleased when I went to visit an instructor and saw examples of suggestions given at a workshop incorporated into the lesson plan "

As one unit of Part 2 of the course focused partly on innovations theory (Unit 3, Considerations for Implementation) and its potential to inform the local and personal innovations process, it's to be expected that many forum posts in that unit were thoughtful reflections on the local problems and opportunities, and represented a strong focus on creating and supporting the winning conditions for innovation:

"In the end, I agree that the best use of our time, and our biggest role, is to simply make it easier, or possible, for innovation to happen – but we can't make it happen. We can focus, as ****** says, on what can be done (e.g., supply the tools), and begin high, rather than try to catch up. For example, make the tool (e.g., a smartboard) available at a site, then wait – see who gives it a try and expresses interest in using it, then support them in their learning. I don't think our role is to move an instructor from digital semi-literacy to digital literacy. Technological literacy emerges from first being motivated to learn, then with experimentation and trial and error. Individuals must do that on their own. But for those who undertake that path, we can have a role in supporting their journey. By making technology available, by pointing them to helpful websites and web-based resources, by creating curriculum that demonstrates how those resources can support classroom learning, and by providing time for instructors to experiment on their own (to build that technological competence)."

And in response to that post:

"We have a strategy for the implementation of edulinc along these lines that seems to be working very well!. We've shared it before, but perhaps not within this course group. For our LINC instructors, we tell them that the LearnIT2teach training is available to them. But we don't tell them to take it – rather we tell them that if they do take it, we (supervisors) will support them by teaching their class for a couple of hours a week (for as long as it takes) so they have some paid time to take the training (until they feel comfortable implementing it with learners). We've had 15 LINC instructors take us up on it!"

This posting was an exemplary discussion of the participant's own potentially very influential role in blended learning innovation:

"I see my role in the process as follows:

- *articulate and communicate vision to the team (we include this in the orientation for instructors' learnIT2teach training sessions)*
- *formulate strategies for implementation (program managers consider realistic and individualized targets for each instructor and provide appropriate support where needed while maintaining the overall goal)*
- *set objectives and timelines for achievement (have to adjust expectations according to instructors' current skills level and break down targets in small increments so they don't get overwhelmed)*

- *request funder for PD and continue to lobby for resources for on-going resources and support (PD days necessary in support on on-going skills development in learning technologies. Other necessary supports include funding to upgrade equipment and to hire specialists to coach and assist instructors on e-technologies.*
- *arrange PD for instructors and provide support (a combination instructors and managers' independent and group on-line learning as well as face-to-face sessions given by the learnit2teach facilitator)*
- *review progress, anticipate gaps and work with team to formulate action plans to problem solve (some instructors need a mentor and in-person assistance when they go through the online training initially)*
- *identify potential e-learning champions among instructors who could be the change agents (exploring the possibility of having lead instructors who could champion e-learning just like the model used in the implementation of PBLA)*
- *set and check for e-learning skills / qualifications in hiring (all new teaching positions now ask for successful candidates to complete learnIT2teach Stage 2 training before the end of probation, preference given to candidates with the skills)*
- *model commitment by engaging in training myself together with all program managers (all program managers enroll in learnit2teach administrator training)" Regina Chan*

Recommendations

The recommendation in Standard 2 to continue to support 'alumni' intercommunication through webinars, surveys and discussion boards to enhance understanding and skill to support the innovation process also applies to this standard. Ongoing engagement will encourage shared practice and lessons learned by reflecting experiences of the local innovation process across a range of service providers.

In addition, the course design included a requirement for a 'capstone' assignment at the end of Part 2: A rather vague requirement for the participant to provide the foundation of a plan for continued local innovation with blended learning. This assignment generated very uneven and incomplete responses. A first recommendation is to revise the Unit 6 assignment to be more structured and specific. This assignment should also be leveraged to provide the agenda for ongoing Community of Practice discussions, including local progress reports in the months and even years following the course.
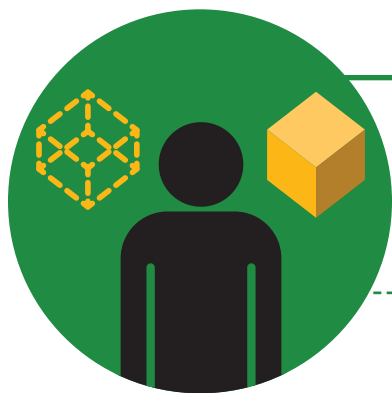
STANDARD 4 Increased awareness of theory and evidence which supports better learning technology practices in the SLT sector

Judgment

Survey responses provide good support for a successful judgment on this standard: Among the units in Part 1, survey respondents particularly highly valued Unit 2: Orientation to CALL and TELL, 93.75% Somewhat or Very Useful, and Unit 5: LINC Learner Courseware, 90.63%, and Unit 6: Professional Development and Training Options, 96.97%

One-hundred percent in the Part 1 survey agreed, "This course has improved my understanding of blended learning and the need for learning technology in language training programs." (30 responses but an additional 7 skipped the question). And,

Although Part 2 doesn't focus as much as Part 1 on blended learning course elements, responses to Question 6 of the Part 2 survey also indicated success on this standard: In response to the statement, "This course has improved my understanding of blended learning and the need for learning technology in language training programs:

Answer Choices	Responses	
YES	**100%**	**30**
NO	**0%**	**0**
TOTAL		**30**

Some useful relevant anecdotes on local experiences reinforced lessons from the LTIL course content:

"Yesterday, I met one of our teachers who is getting trained to do blended learning in the classroom and asked her questions about the advantages and challenges she is finding in blended learning. She used on line LINC 4 activities to review and reinforce what she has taught already and found the online activities very effective She also used surveys for students needs and satisfaction and was very excited to get quick results."

Near the end of Part 1, a special forum titled "Anything on your mind?" solicited some thoughtful reflections on the Part 1 so far:

"Ability to communicate to others, to ask, respond and be responded to is I believe the key to course and program quality and success. For this communication to be meaningful, we may reach back to the old methodology of a face to face classroom: that communication needs to be relevant, aimed at n+1 level of learner's proficiency, there has to be a real

information gap that needs to be filled for it to feel real and be effective, and it needs to be repetitive, providing ample "communication time" to each participant (the old concept of student talk time)."

Another quote indicated that participants had begun to think of ways to innovate with the LearnIT2teach/Edulinc core blended learning model and explore fresh learner opportunities:

*"Good food for thought, S****! The "flipped learning" becomes an opportunity to go beyond the "idea" that it is the instructors who engages in informal observations, in offering feedback, and in doing formal assessment of their learners' progress. The "flipped learning" (with the use of the available LINC courseware): 1) offers our learners more choices in how they can demonstrate what they have learners; 2) and teachers more ways of gaining insights into and monitoring their learners' progress. Also, the face-to-face classroom meetings (direct student-instructor & students-students contact) can be treated as "time/space" for real conversations between the instructor and learners as well as "time/space" where learners themselves are empowered to observe the progress of /and provide feedback to other learners, and assess their own individual learning progress."*

This post mirrored other thoughtful responses to readings in the course on the evolution of learning in the Internet age:

"The traditional role of the teacher has changed to more of a facilitator who fosters learning autonomy, where students not only learn on their own but take responsibility of their learning. The teacher acts as a resource to help the students and facilitate the work inside or outside the classroom such as in group projects and presentations, in order for students to develop many essential skills that are needed for the workplace such as communication and thinking skills, technology skills, etc. thus encouraging team work and self-reliance.

The 21st century teacher is not any more the knowing all kind of person, it is the student who, with the new approaches to education, is researching, thinking, putting ideas together, and creating or innovating through the use of technology in the classroom. More and more the classroom is becoming a place where teacher and students are working together to create an environment of collaborative work where students are at the centre of the learning process and the teacher is just a facilitator"

If there were more research into the impact of blended learning on settlement language training program outcomes and effectiveness, it would be very useful as an augmentation to the course. The sector needs more research on the impact of technology-enhanced language learning on learners and their individual immigration projects, or more specifically, the impact of blended or other contemporary language learning modalities on learning goals or especially task-based language learning. These are lines of inquiry for future evaluators to potentially follow.

Recommendations

To expand on the case for learning technology presented in the course, more evidence is required. Evidence for LINC blended learning that exists, as reflected in the forums, is mainly anecdotal. A demonstration research project located in a service provider organization that has made the transition to LINC blended learning (Edulinc) could begin by looking at the courseware's impact on learning and teaching. Potential questions to be posed to the research could examine gains in self-efficacy, language proficiency or settlement-adaptation.

STANDARD 5 Understanding of core persuasion and leadership strategies to support learning technology innovation within the participant's organization

Judgment

The exit survey for Part 2 indicate that participants felt they had made good progress on this standard: The result asked participants to agree or disagree with the statement, "This course has deepened my understanding of theories of leadership and innovation and the role they play in local technology innovation":

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Total	Weighted Average
46.15%	46.15%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
6	6	1	0	0	13	1.62

Source: LTIL Participant Survey Data 2017

In the discussion forums, there was frequent evidence of active planning and implementation of blended learning in participant's programs, often in the form of questions posed to other administrators and lead teachers. Participants enjoyed describing their programs and sharing key issues and concerns with peers.

"As coordinator my best advice is to identify your champions and support them in every way possible. Slowly but surely the others will get on board!"

"If instructors are no longer perceived as owners of knowledge and information, then the hierarchical workplace structure no longer applies. However, teachers still need to be leaders to encourage independent thinking, problem solving and critical thinking skills that one needs to acquire in order to function in today's society.

"The idea of distributed leadership becomes interesting in this context as it applies to not only the managers but all stakeholders: administrators, supervisors, instructors, and learners."

There was particularly active discussion of the role of leadership in Part 2 of the course, Units 4 and 5, Classroom Leadership and Facilitating Change through Leadership:

"Another concept I pondered on from this module was 'distributed leadership' by Marti Cleveland [-Innis]. It is important from an HR perspective to rally support to break down the barrier to change. By nurturing leaders among instructors who are the early adopters, they can become the change agents. We have started looking for instructors who are well adapted to online training when we recruit. Our PBLA Leads also have now been adapted to online learning. I see potential in these individuals being the champions for change. Some cross training opportunities can be arranged for instructors during which these champions can influence the others by sharing successful examples of implementation and provide demo lessons on the integration of online training. Their active involvement cultivates an environment that encourages change and helps raise the standards among their follow instructors."

"The readings in this module touched on quite a number of different perspectives on the role of leadership in the innovation process. I like the point made in the "6 Qualities of Great Leaders" that leaders have the responsibilities to "turn big ideas into executable plan". From my observation of instructors going through new initiatives such as PBLA or LearnIT2teach, I find that the notion of "exaggerated fear" (we read about in the last module) is sometimes the result of staff having a mental shut down to "big ideas". In order to communicate the vision clearly and make the plan comprehensible to instructors, we have to present the road map in smaller but concrete steps using their language and in context immediately relevant to them."

"I was in a LearnIT2Teach Stage 2 training session with our instructors last week. One instructor admitted that she was frustrated because she was technically challenged. She could not form a mental picture of how the pieces come together as a whole in "layman terms" (as she put it). For that instructor and a few others who shared similar concerns, we dropped the original agenda for that day and took a detour to look at the EduLinc courseware. I went over the overall structure and layout of the courseware with a few examples made in reference to their lesson planning

and classroom routine. At that moment, I saw some light bulbs come up. Framing the information in context that is familiar to them helped alleviate some of the fear.'

The frontline experience of participants brought an enormous benefit to the course and participant insights translated the ideas and information in the readings into the practical meat and potatoes of the discussion boards.

"This is key in my plans in implementing technology into our classrooms and fits nicely with my management style. I believe in empowering all of my staff into various leadership roles, regardless of our hierarchy. In an ideal environment, our org chart would be flat, with each member holding individual responsibilities but all contributing to the main goal of the program/organization. As such, there may be an opportunity for a teacher or a teaching assistant to be the lead in our roll out of CALL."

Recommendations

Participation in the course by sector professionals was voluntary, and we can surmise that they self-selected as technology innovators. Most had already taken steps locally in their programs to implement blended learning. Rogers research posits an organizational S-curve to describe the rate of adoption for an innovation to describe an initial adoption by a few individuals, and progress toward the final stage when just a few outliers eventually adopt (Rogers, 2005, p.23). In the LTIL training, participants local innovation projects were all past the initial stage but otherwise, each participant's innovation instance was unique in terms of the barriers and opportunities it faced. The survey and discussion board data indicate positive thoughtful responses to the readings on leadership in the course. However, a scale that encouraged participants to rate each reading, podcast or video in the course would provide additional data to assess the impact of the curricula and indicate where curricula could be better tuned to the needs of participants.

STANDARD 6 Awareness of the role program evaluation and effective communication can play in supporting local learning technology innovation

Judgment

Like the innovation process itself, evaluation is an exercise in communication among stakeholders. Evaluation was a topic in Part 2 of the course, and although the surveys didn't measure the impact of the LTIL training on evaluation plans, some very thoughtful posts indicated participants were active locally in a process of evaluation:

"Evaluate administration through:

- *Type and variety of Pd offering: job-embedded, conferences, collaboration with colleagues, online webinars, other*
- *Willingness and motivation to learn*
- *Positive attitude*
- *Evidence-based course design in consideration of learners' needs*
- *Purchasing and periodic upgrading of equipment and infrastructure*
- *Monitoring & evaluating performance"*

"…Pilot projects, hence, are necessary to initiate change and experiment with new models of programming such as blended learning. They need to be introduced in an organized fashion with all parties involved, administrators, instructors, and students. They also need to be monitored and evaluated carefully in order to understand how effective they are. Our coordinator, H*****, has already mentioned the attempt to experiment with this approach and is advocating for this change in programming."

In the final unit of Part 2: Next Steps, one discussion board addressed evaluation issues as participants were asked:

- What are the key elements of an evaluation strategy?
- Do you have an evaluation strategy in place to guide and inform the innovation process?
- What role will evaluation play in local learning technology innovation in your organization. The questions elicited one comprehensive original post which motivated a lively discussion and a number of responses:

"In developing an evaluation strategy for innovation, I think we could ask ourselves the following questions:

1. *What is the purpose for the evaluation?*
2. *What criteria are we going to use for the evaluation? What are the relevant questions to ask?*

3. *How are we going to conduct the evaluation (e.g. timing, methods, activities, tools, etc.)*
4. *Who will be involved in the evaluation and what are their roles?*
5. *How are we going to use the findings of the evaluation?*

Our evaluation strategy depends a lot on the purpose we intend to achieve. As has been pointed out in C. Tribble (Ed.), Managing Change in English Language Teaching: Lessons from Experience, impact of innovation in education very often cannot be effectively measured in the short term. Resonating the importance of "agency" and "ownership" among the key players in the change process, Rea-Dickins advocates the "Stake-holder Approach".

"Processes which are particularly important here are the evaluation activities such as listening, debating, negotiating, and building in ownership and use of evaluation findings as part of projects. These processes not only communicate an understanding of the changes proposed by the project, but also open up spaces for discussing these changes and their impact." (Managing Change in English Language Teaching: Lessons from Experience, edited by C. Tribble, pp. 82)

I agree that this would be a much better and more useful approach. When instructors are actively involved in identifying what information will be useful to them and how best we can collect that information, evaluation could be a valuable tool to guide and enhance the innovation process. Drawing on some suggestions mentioned in the article, I would explore having the following activities included the evaluation process:

With the instructors
Dialogue with instructors and gather their reflections on the change process. Ask them to document and provide feedback on their experience: changes in the perception of the innovation over time (both their and the learners' perception), what and how they use the online tools, frequency, preparation prior to and special arrangements during implementation, students' response, successes and challenges, adaptions made, what contributes to the success or barriers, what changes will they recommend, observed impact on delivery and students' learning, what additional support will they need, etc.

With the learners
Conduct surveys and focus groups. Check for level of readiness and interests among learners. Ask for changes they notice in their learning and overall experience, both tangible and intangible. Ask for examples of how they have used. Ask what they like most and what they would like to do differently.

With the managers / administrators
Conduct class visits and routine program monitoring to note how the innovation has been implemented (perception of the innovation and changes in attitude over time, frequency of online activities, relevance of online activities to lesson objectives, learners' readiness and how they

engaged they are, effectiveness of delivery, progress over time, etc. Note any gaps for further training and issues to be resolved. Identify best practices to be shared. Compare learners' CLB progress pre and post innovation."

Recommendations

Evaluation questions were specific to the latter units of the training, mainly the final unit of Part 2. Beginning the evaluation discussion earlier in the course and threading it through earlier units is a recommendation.
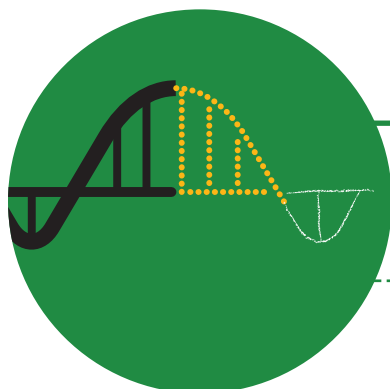
STANDARD 7 Articulation of a plan for local learning technology innovation.

Judgment

The survey responses indicate a willingness to continue to engage in innovation with blended learning: In the Part 2 exit survey, participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "Because of this course, I will be increasing my efforts to encourage and support learning technology innovation in my program":

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Total	Weighted Average
38.46%	53.85%	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%		
5	7	0	0	1	13	1.85

Source: LTIL Participant Survey Data 2017

Articulation of a plan for local blended learning innovation was not an expectation of participants until Unit 6, Part 2 of the course, and even then, the requirement was not very specific and responses were somewhat sparse and diverse. However, there was plentiful evidence of planning sprinkled throughout the twelve units of the course, albeit the plans were in various stages of progress toward implementation.

One major SLT provider provided an interesting case as it was represented by six participants in a single cohort. This cohort was very actively led and engaged in developing and sharing their plans for a large scale 'conversion' to blended learning.

When asked in Part 1, Unit 5: Learner Courseware, "What would l like about LearnIT2teach?":

*"My question to self is As a learner, what would I like about LearnIt?
One thing that I understood from the different conversations (as well as
feedback from our blended ELT course) and what I understand about what
learner readiness means is that if we don't invest in a plan to lay out clear
guidelines along with parameters and expectations for the learners in terms
of completing each activity/module/unit and guide them through those
expectations at the start of a blended course, our participation rate may
drop considerably."*

And when asked in Part 2, Unit 3, Considerations for Implementation, "What role can you
play in your local innovation process?", this represented one thoughtful post about the
participant's own role in innovation:

"I see my role in the process as follows:

- *articulate and communicate vision to the team (we include this in the
  orientation for instructors' learnIT2teach training sessions)*
- *formulate strategies for implementation (program managers consider
  realistic and individualized targets for each instructors and provide
  appropriate support where needed while maintaining the overall goal)*
- *set objectives and timelines for achievement (have to adjust expectations
  according to instructors' current skills level and break down targets in
  small increments so they don't get overwhelmed)*
- *request funder for PD and continue to lobby for resources for on-going
  resources and support (PD days necessary in support on on-going skills
  development in learning technologies. Other necessary supports include
  funding to upgrade equipment and to hire specialists to coach and assist
  instructors on e-technologies.*
- *arrange PD for instructors and provide support (a combination
  instructors and managers' independent and group on-line learning as well
  as face-to-face sessions given by the learnit2teach facilitator)*
- *review progress, anticipate gaps and work with team to formulate action
  plans to problem solve (some instructors need a mentor and in-person
  assistance when they go through the online training initially)*
- *identify potential e-learning champions among instructors who could be
  the change agents (exploring the possibility of having lead instructors who
  could champion e-learning just like the model used in the implementation
  of PBLA)*
- *set and check for e-learning skills / qualifications in hiring (all new
  teaching positions now ask for successful candidates to complete
  learnIT2teach Stage 2 training before the end of probation, preference
  given to candidates with the skills)*

- *model commitment by engaging in training myself together with all program managers (all program managers enroll in learnit2teach administrator training)"*

An open discussion in Part 2, Unit 6 elicited thoughtful responses:

"How is your local plan for implementation progressing? What influence have the readings and discussions in this course had on your planning and strategy? This forum is optional."

*"We (the ***** group) will be brainstorming ideas for a local implementation plan on the wiki in the next few weeks.*

We had already devised a plan for the implementation (among LINC instructors) last year, for implementing LearnIT2Teach training and the use of Edulinc, in a way that supports LINC instructors – so we don't need to document this again (for learnit2teach). This is our 2nd year of implementation of that plan. We have ongoing (about once every 6 weeks) meetings, during which we include an agenda item devoted to check-ins related to that plan.

However, our group (TCDSB) could decide to brainstorm about an implementation plans for the Adult ESL group (which does not have access to learnIT2Teach), or about innovation in technology in general. Can you tell us when you are closing this course (i.e., when we will stop having access to our wiki?). thanks."

Representative of what LearnIT2teach surveys of the broader sector are telling project evaluators were other posts in the same forum about barriers and challenges to planning:

"However, teachers feel that, under the current structure for planning and professional development time, they still do not have enough time to learn a lot of new things. They are more focused on planning and delivering quality lessons, completing reports and increasingly incorporating PBLA into their teaching and learning practices."

And in response to that from another participant:

"So, how can we find more time within our busy schedules for PD without taking away from teaching time? Ideas might include lunch-and-learns and asynchronous online training opportunities that would allow teachers to learn at their own pace when they have time. I appreciate the latter in the LearnIT2Teach teacher and administrator training programs I am working on. Having a mentor in the teacher training program means that I never have to feel adrift at sea just because I am learning on my own. I can also contact my mentor for support at any time."

Not only were barriers and challenges identified but participants also articulated ideas for overcoming them:

"The LIT2Teach project & PBLA LT training were both introduced to BC LINC programs in 2014. In addition to our LTs completing the PBLA certification training this past June and several instructors beginning the LIT2T training this past spring, we began introducing sharing sessions during program-wide staff meetings last year. As an "instructor-turned-administrator" last year, it was incredibly inspiring to see how well instructors as a whole responded to a more localized approach to PD. It is still early days for us as we implement these initiatives and one of my goals this year is to focus on building more opportunities to "Reimagine the Ecosystem and the Offerings" (2nd idea in the article). I think adult settlement language instructors, much like educators across the profession, have learning needs that transcend one-off, didactic models of professional development. As we roll-out PBLA implementation this year, I'm hoping that the ongoing peer mentoring/collegial coaching strategies modeled by the in-house lead teacher team will develop an improved culture of experimentation, sharing, & collaboration. Ideally, this will help create an enhanced climate for the continuous, job-embedded PD needed to support instructors who are also implementing LIT2T and other TELL practices."

Recommendations

All participants were actively engaged in the courses in discussing and sharing planning. However, a more structured capstone assignment requiring development of the broad elements of a local plan for blended learning technology innovation should be a requirement of future iterations of the course. A revised assignment would be something like this:

"Address your personal role in innovation in your language training program and your response to the blended language training innovation challenge and your strategy for moving your program forward. Include your next steps to implementing blended learning in your language training program, your approach to leadership and your mid and longer term strategy for implementation and ongoing evaluation.

STANDARD 8 Ongoing engagement in an online community of settlement language training practitioners.

Judgment

In the context of blended learning innovation in the settlement language training sector, grounding an online course in the theoretical construct of a Community of Practice (CoP) provides clear benefits. As the training is strictly voluntary for professionals in the sector, nearly all clearly self-selected as participants based on a pre-disposition toward blended learning and technology integration. What they sought was deeper knowledge of problems, solutions, barriers and opportunities. Some of this they gained from the curriculum, but much of it emerged through LTIL course engagement with other professionals confronting similar issues or opportunities. Interaction with others in the courses added context to the readings and other course matter, and helped participants produce meaning through personal interpretation. *"To move forward, Brown (2000) suggests—we must not limit ourselves to merely looking ahead but we must also learn to "look around" because learning occurs when members of a community of practice (CoP) socially construct their understanding of some text, issue or event and then share this understanding with others"* (O'Donnell, Porter, McGuire, Garavan, Heffernan & Cleary, 2003).

Survey data support the emergence of a CoP: In the Part 1 exit survey, all respondents agreed with the statement, *"This course has provided an opportunity to share information, challenges and opportunities for technology innovation with other program leaders."* And in response to another question, 81.48% reported that the discussion forums were a very beneficial learning activity and the other 18.52% thought they were somewhat beneficial. In the Part 2 survey, participants were asked for responses to this statement, *"This course has provided an opportunity to share information, challenges and opportunities for technology innovation with other program leaders."* with this result:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Total	Weighted Average
53.85%	46.15%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%		
7	6	0	0	0	13	1.85

Source: LTIL Participant Survey Data 2017

In Part 1, Unit 4, The LearnIT2teach Project the discussion board asked participants to post their reflections on the project's Mission, Vision, Values statement. Several noted the value of social learning and creating online community. A post on the importance of reflective practice got several affirmative responses. It also got participants thinking about how to encourage CoP in their local programs:

"I wonder if we could try this with a few willing Instructors – in-Charge and meet together for a collective reflection. It could potentially filter down to instructors. I'd be willing to embark on this if you think we could find other willing participants ??"

Beyond what we can infer from enthusiastic participation in sharing experiences in the discussion forums. this comment is indicative of an emerging Community of Practice:

" I agree with Dr. Hubbard that instructors learn more from each other than from a single workshop so we need to find a way for workshop participants to communicate and collaborate with each other once the workshop is history."

Recommendations

The project should encourage all alumni to engage in an ongoing Community of Practice by creating ongoing opportunities for participants to share goals, plans, challenges, barriers and opportunities for blended learning innovation.

CONCLUSIONS

The course has been very well received as supported by the survey data. In Part 1:

- 90% of participants completed the course, and lack of time was the reason for those that didn't.
- 66% spent between 11 and 13 hours on course, the rest less.
- All six units were rated above 75% as either somewhat or very useful

Parallel results were recorded for the Part 2 survey:

- 100% of respondents completed the course.
- 11/13 spent more than 12 hours, 1 spent 12, 1 spent 7 or less.
- All units were rated above 90% as somewhat or very useful except Unit 6 (84.62%):

	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	A Bit Useful	Not At All Usefull	Not Applicable	Total	Weighted Average
UNIT 1: Program Performance	76.92%	15.38%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
	10	2	1	0	0	13	1.31
UNIT 2: Client Needs	76.92%	15.38%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
	10	2	1	0	0	13	1.31
UNIT 3: Considerations for Implementation	69.23%	23.08%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
	9	3	1	0	0	13	1.38
UNIT 4: Classroom Leadership	61.54%	30.77%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
	8	4	1	0	0	13	1.46
UNIT 5: Facilitating Change through Leadership	69.23%	23.08%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%		
	9	3	1	0	0	13	1.38
UNIT 6: Next Steps	53.85%	30.77%	15.38%	0.00%	0.00%		
	7	4	2	0	0	13	1.62

As for the instructional strategy employed in the course, Question 5 of the Part 2 survey indicated strong support for each of the content elements: "Was your participation in these activities beneficial to your learning? Please indicate your rating and your reasons."

	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	A Bit Beneficial	Not At All Beneficial	Not Applicable	Total	Weighted Average
Discussion Forums	**75.00%**	**25.00%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**		
	9	3	0	0	0	12	1.25
Core readings	**69.23%**	**30.77%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**		
	9	4	0	0	0	13	1.31
External Readings	**50.00%**	**41.67%**	**8.33%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**		
	6	5	1	0	0	12	1.58
Audio Podcasts	**69.23%**	**23.08%**	**7.69%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**		
	9	3	1	0	0	13	1.38
Stremed Video	**61.54%**	**15.38%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**23.08%**		
	8	2	0	0	3	13	2.08

A generally positive response was recorded for Question 15 of the Part 2 survey: "Overall, how well did the course meet your expectations?"

Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Did Not Meet Expectations	Total	Weighted Average
46.15%	**46.15%**	**7.69%**		
6	6	1	13	1.62

To gather longer term data and support an ongoing Community of Practice, opportunities for online 'alumni' gatherings should be explored, perhaps by providing one or more synchronous meetings, and the course surveys should be redeployed in 3, 6, 9 and 12 months or further and results shared with participants.

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