

Upscaling a systematic storage method for the collection of evidence against professional standards from a small rural campus to an institutional wide implementation

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The Context

At the forefront of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) accreditation is the need to collect professional learning evidence against the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST).

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. They define the work of teachers and make explicit elements of high-quality, effective teaching in 21st century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students.

(Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2017)

The School of Education at La Trobe University required a systematic approach for preservice teachers to collect quality evidence against the AITSL standards. The School of Education had previously offered several methods for the collection of evidence, none of which was simple to use, all of which relied on the students to determine which evidence needed to be collected, and some which relied on the students building their own collection system. A number of commercial programs, such as the AITSL app, were identified but none of these allowed for students to collate their evidence over a long period of time or provide preservice teachers with the opportunity to review their evidence to find the gaps in their learning and professional experience.

The Problem

In 2017, La Trobe University's School of Education implemented new degrees across all ITE programs. The accreditation of the new degrees included the requirement to collect Critical Tasks against the AITSL Standards. Critical Tasks were identified throughout all subjects/courses at accreditation. Critical Tasks are assessment tasks that have been identified as demonstrating

the AITSL standards. A systematic method of how this critical evidence would be collected had not been determined by the School of Education during the accreditation process. At the end of their ITE degree, over 3500 preservice teachers would be required to demonstrate their ongoing collection of Critical Tasks.

Preservice teachers needed to understand the importance of collecting quality evidence against the AITSL standards and commence the practice of gathering evidence to instill lifelong reflective practices. Determining the best systematic method for collecting the Critical Task evidence could not be the sole responsibility of the preservice teachers and an institutional approach needed to be identified that could be implemented across La Trobe's multi-campus University within all ITE degrees. A semi-automated system needed to be identified that could provide a systematic approach to collecting quality evidence.

The Approach

For three years prior to the implementation of the new ITE degrees at La Trobe University, I had successfully utilised PebblePad Collections to gather evidence against the 37 focus areas within the seven AITSL standards into a systematic repository with a small cohort of undergraduate preservice teachers on a regional campus.

Providing a layered workbook that was driven by the collection of evidence using a cascaded tagging system, preservice teachers were able to collect their own evidence to demonstrate their ongoing professional learning toward the AITSL standards. Preservice teachers were supported with weekly face-to-face classes in their first semester in their ITE degree. The evidence collection was a required assessment embedded in the commencement of a professional portfolio. Nearing the end of their four-year undergraduate teaching degree, preservice teachers were required to again submit their collection of evidence.

With the implementation of the newly accredited ITE degrees, I offered this method for collecting evidence as a possible solution for the collection of Critical Tasks to the School of Education. To ensure the successful upscaling of the systematic collection of evidence from 30 students on a regional campus to over 3500 students across five campuses, two key factors would be required:

1. Significant upskilling of staff knowledge of the requirements of course accreditation and the use and implementation of PebblePad; and
2. Embedded strategic support for all preservice teachers.

To facilitate these key factors, I built multifaceted Workbooks that would collect all assessment types via cascaded tags. The Workbooks were made available to all ITE preservice teachers via Workspaces in ATLAS. Both students and staff were provided with online support materials facilitated by PebblePad portfolios shared to the web and made available via URL.

Student support resources included:

- Videos and materials to explain the Digital Evidentiary Portfolio (DEP) designed to collect Critical Tasks, including:
 - how to access and activate the DEP.
 - how evidence is designed to be collected.
- Face to face teaching sessions across all new ITE programs.

Staff support resources included:

- Videos and materials to explain the DEP designed to collect Critical Tasks.
 - how to access the DEP and the appropriate tagging system.
 - how to build resources for Critical Tasks and provide access to students.
- How to add cascaded tags for evidence to be collected in student DEPs.
- Just in time support for Subject Coordinators with limited knowledge of PebblePad to build resources, or at least implement a generic resource that was made available via the La Trobe Learning and Teaching (LTLT) Educational Design team.

The DEP was designed as an institutional collection of evidence in response to the School of Education's accreditation of ITE degrees. In order to facilitate students to develop their reflective practice for selecting quality evidence against the AITSL standards, an additional student owned system, an Evidence Library was made available. The Evidence Library was provided to students to enable them to select and collect their own evidence. Tags are used to collect both the Critical Task evidence and self-selected student evidence. The process of accessing and using the Evidence Library is the same as the DEP.

The Results

The use of PebblePad Collections and a cascaded tagging system has addressed the La Trobe University School of Education's need for a repository with a method of systematic collection of evidence against the APST. All ITE preservice teachers have access to both the DEP and Evidence Library.

The process of collecting evidence is embedded throughout ITE degrees with all subjects having identified Critical Task evidence. From the commencement of their degree, all ITE preservice teachers have evidence designed to collect via cascaded tags into their DEP.

The Evidence Library provides students with the opportunity to identify evidence they feel may be beneficial for recording or planning professional development, applying for a job, celebrating their lifelong learning journey, or meeting certification and registration requirements (Hartnell-Young & Morriss 2007 as cited in Earp, 2014).

The system of collection has been implemented for one year and we are yet to realise the effectiveness and results. Students in their final Masters of Teaching degree are required to submit their DEP at the end of the 2018 academic year to prove their ongoing collection of Critical Tasks from throughout their degree, demonstrating their ongoing development across the AITSL standards.

One of the biggest implications of upscaling these elaborate systems of evidence collections is the shift from personalised student support (in a cohort of 30 students, face-to-face staff support for students was easily achieved), to students needing to take complete ownership of collecting their evidence. Of great importance is the need for staff to embrace the responsibility of providing students with working templates with accurate tags.

The success of upscaling is yet to be measured. Outputs will not be realised until 2020 in the large undergraduate degrees. Although postgraduate students are due to provide evidence of their critical tasks at the end of 2018, students are not required to demonstrate their ongoing use of their personal evidence collections. Determining the uptake and application of these collections requires further analysis. A simpler mapping of collections with clear reporting in ATLAS would be of great assistance, similar to the tree view available in the earlier Classic version of PebblePad.

Lessons Learnt

Upscaling

The project was successfully upscaled as it was carefully managed by a small team of experts. A barrier whilst upscaling has been the enrolment of students in workspaces without LMS integration and synchronized student enrolment.

Uptake

Engaging both staff and students has been our greatest challenge. One of our greatest barriers has been buy in by staff who are required to build and manage assessment tasks in PebblePad. The implications of staff who are resistant to learning how to use PebblePad is the increased need for support, and of more importance, the flow on effect to student attitude toward PebblePad.

Upskilling

To support preservice teachers across all ITE programs, scaffolded, staged support needed to be available to students for 'Just In Time' support for 'clarifying confusing material and develop[ing] deep learning strategies'(McLean, Attardi, Faden, & Goldszmidt, 2016, p. 54). Across undergraduate degrees in the School of Education a twelve-week core subject embeds scaffolded

learning experiences for familiarizing ITE preservice teachers with PebblePad, its tools and of most importance, the DEP and Evidence Library. ITE preservice teachers within Master of Teaching degrees, on the other hand, are provided an opportunity to attend a one-hour workshop during their one week intensive each semester where they are quickly orientated to PebblePad, the DEP and Evidence Library. These are demonstrated, and students are then directed to the online support materials for future reference. Whilst there is a clear imbalance in this delivery process for the different cohorts, the online materials appear at this time to sufficiently support Master of Teaching preservice teachers.

With the urgent requirement by the School of Education for this systematic collection of evidence to be implemented across all degrees at the commencement of 2017, the impact of the rapid pace of implementation is now becoming apparent. The lack of opportunity to upskill staff prior to the implementation of this systematic evidence collection has resulted in some staff feeling overwhelmed and under resourced. Whilst staff in leadership support this method of collecting Critical Task evidence against the AITSL standards, they do not necessarily understand the system and promote it without having sophisticated knowledge of how it works. Ad hoc support has been apparent, however there have been limited opportunities for face-to-face sessions for all staff to upskill and it is now becoming evident that there is a need and desire for this to occur. If I was to do this again I would phase in the systematic collection of evidence without a 'boots and all' approach. Building staff confidence in the use and knowledge of PebblePad is essential. For this to occur, an investment of time and resources needs to be made at an institutional level. Staff need to invest and trust in the system in order for them to become capable users who are able to confidently promote its implementation. With staff invested in the system, ingrained knowledge holders will become more widespread, available to further support their colleagues. The flow on effect to students would be a more positive, supported experience.

Take home messages about 'Scaling up'

- Careful and strategic management of the system of implementation – ie. when making the resources available to students.
- PebblePad collections work – imparting this knowledge and enthusiasm to end users is of greatest importance
- Users, in particular staff, need to be invested.
- Staff need knowledge and confidence with the use of PebblePad including the use of Collections, before introducing to students
- When introducing this systematical collection of evidence, support needs to be readily available – preferably via a multifaceted approach

References

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2017). Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Retrieved from <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>

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McLean, S., Attardi, S. M., Faden, L., & Goldszmidt, M. (2016). Flipped classrooms and student learning: not just surface gains. *Advances in physiology education*, 40(1), 47-55. doi:10.1152/advan.00098.2015

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