

TEACHING & LEARNING JOURNAL - EDITION 1

CPD turns freefall into gliding, and, without it, I would not have survived the fall

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At 2.50 pm, on 23rd March 2020, Boris Johnson pushed me out of a plane without a parachute and I have been falling ever since.

As I started plummeting, I realised that I was losing things. My classroom fluttered off before I knew what was happening. Year 11 rushed through my fingers. Then Year 10, 9, tutor groups, and everyone else coasted into the sunset. Dust landed on my car. I couldn't tether 6 am, so she took wing for the first time in thirty years: she soared past in the wind, laughing. I wasn't a teacher anymore. So, why would I need CPD?

Because, in that instant, I had gone from being an expert teacher to being a complete novice.

In the week before lockdown, I had to learn how to use Microsoft Teams. Because I needed to teach my Year 10 students to use Microsoft Teams. It turned out, I needed to teach them how to log on to their account first, but we found each other on a piece of tech we didn't know existed the week before.

After lockdown, we set up a chat. We chatted. So, I started to learn a new language.

Me: Are you going to answer my email?

Student: IDK

Me: Sorry, what?

Student: NVM

Me: What does that mean?

Student: LMAO

To this day, I still haven't decided if the A is appropriate for a professional conversation, but there were bigger concerns at the time.

How could I effectively teach students remotely? How would I set work? How would I collect work? How would I provide feedback? How could do right by my students?

We answered these questions: become an expert in SMHW; master Microsoft Forms; then, master Microsoft Teams; conquer merging feedback sheets. Learn how to share with colleagues: realise the benefits of accepting what people share. Struggle to send hundreds of emails; persevere when no-one replies. Continuous Professional Development was no longer a protracted, painstaking, PowerPoint induced coma. We had to learn how to do these things. RIGHT NOW!

I used the internet, my home library, my colleagues and my online training and cobbled together some ideas. I made my first tentative attempt to take off... and just when it felt like I was levelling off - CRASH – someone got on the dispatch box and disavowed the use of homemade wings.

But by now, I was on to something. I could learn how to do new things. I could combine different skills. I could work with colleagues. I could collaborate. I went to online training I could not have attended during school hours. I started to develop, change, grow. I started seeing problems as challenges. Challenges as opportunities. Opportunities as a brighter future.

I learned to glide.

So, why do we need CPD? Because CPD turns freefall into gliding, and, without it, we cannot survive when we fall.

CPD means we can get better. It means we can adapt. It means we can overcome. We have learned so much in the last few months. We must remember what we have learned and apply it. We must use it to make 'new normal' school marvellous.

If we do, we might even teach our students to fly.

