

# Venture Pitch

Assignment 3

ETEC 522

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## Venture Pitch

### The Pain Point

Systemic educational reform is coming fast and furious in British Columbia with the launch of BC's Education Plan. The plan is congruent with emerging global trends in educational reform and proposes many positive changes for teaching and learning; however, it also raises many questions: Are the teachers of BC ready for systemic change? Are there adequate professional development opportunities to address changes? Are traditional professional development methods suitable to effect transformative practice and implement change?

A rigorous Professional Inquiry into BC's Education Plan reveals a potentially fatal flaw in the implementation process of BC's educational reform initiative as well as exposing a pain point in the provinces current offerings and methods of delivery for professional development.

### The Flaw in BC's Education Plan

BC's Education Plan is ambitious in its focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and personalized learning supported by technology (BC's Education Plan, 2011). Significant investment has been promised in regards to increased access to digital tools, resources and telecommunications services (BC's Education Plan, 2011). However, many of BC's teachers do not possess the necessary skills, knowledge and training to successfully implement such ambitious reform initiatives or take



advantage of increased access to technology.

The professional development of teachers is vital to educational change and should be a major focus of systemic reform initiatives. However, BC's Education Plan makes no mention of additional investment in professional development for teachers, but merely notes the need for more effective use of existing non-instructional days (BC's Education Plan 2011). Failure to address the need for additional professional development of in-service teachers may present a significant barrier to achieving the goals of BC's Education Plan. This gap in the transformative process exposes an additional pain point in BC's traditional offerings for teacher professional development.

### Problems with Traditional PD

The B.C. Ministry of Education's Standard School Calendar allots a maximum of 6 non-instructional days in K-12 per year. These non-instructional days traditionally take the form of one-day, face-to-face professional development workshops that provide minimal choice or interactivity and little to no follow-up or support, leaving few incentives for real transformative practice.

### The Solution

Online professional development (OPD) enables anytime, anywhere learning for educational professionals on a variety of topics. OPD also overcomes many of the shortcomings presented by traditional PD.

### The Venture – 21COPD

Our team has completed extensive research into the literature on OPD and analyzed various free OPD ventures. Our research and analysis has culminated in our own OPD venture, the 21st Century Online Professional Development (21COPD) website, an open educational resource (OER) which invites BC educators and educators worldwide to engage in interactive self-directed and collaborative PD opportunities.

21COPD is a free, interactive, media rich, web-based professional development resource that will not only address the needs of BC teachers in the wake of BC's Education Plan, but also overcome many of the deficiencies of traditional PD.

### Offerings

#### *OPD Courses*

An ever-growing list of asynchronous OPD courses on a variety of topics for varying levels of technical competencies can be accessed anytime by users. OPD courses include rich multimedia resources and provide authentic tasks for participants to apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge. Upon completion of OPD courses, participants are encouraged to reflect on their learning and engage in a community of practice via 21COPD Moodle forums. Users are encouraged to submit ideas and proposals of OPD courses for peer review on the OPD Courses page of the 21COPD Wordpress site.

#### *Webinars*

Synchronous online learning via webinars on emerging global trends in education, including 21st century skills, technology integration and more, are hosted bi-monthly on the 21COPD Moodle LMS. Webinars are facilitated by



members of the 21COPD team using the open source video conferencing tool Big Blue Button. All webinars are archived for follow-up and continued access. All webinar topics are posted for further discussion in the 21COPD Moodle forums. Users are encouraged to submit ideas and proposals for future webinars for peer review on the Webinars page of the 21COPD Wordpress site.

### *Group Facilitators for Blended Workshops*

21COPD provides trained facilitators who can turn any 21COPD webinar or course into a blended workshop for larger groups. Users are also encouraged to take facilitator training OPD courses on the 21COPD Moodle site so they can host their own webinars and blended professional development workshops.

### *Community of Practice*

Users are encouraged to engage in a vibrant community of practice by participating in the 21COPD Moodle Forums, reviewing other OPD resources and by contributing ideas, proposals and peer reviews for future webinars and OPD courses.

### *Additional Resources*

21COPD provides a comprehensive list of links to global OPD resources, videos and tutorials, lesson plans and teaching resources.

## **Differentiation**

21COPD overcomes many of the shortcomings presented by traditional PD and offers many additional benefits. Instead of a series of limited choices of one-day workshops which offer little in terms of follow-up or support typical of traditional PD, 21COPD resources offer flexibility in choice, time and pace and enable support and continued learning through a community of practice. Moreover, where most traditional PD offerings offer few opportunities for practical application and transformative practice, 21COPD offerings provide authentic tasks and opportunities to reflect upon and transform current practice.

## **Championship**

### **The Team**

The 21COPD team is a cohort of 8 teachers from across BC who are in varying stages of completion of UBC's online Masters of Educational Technology (MET) Programme. Their combined teaching experience spans all grade levels and subject areas, including Adult Education, and their post-graduate work in the MET Programme has afforded them unique expertise in learning technologies.

Following the launch of BC's Education Plan in October of 2011, this group of teachers engaged in a Professional Inquiry funded by a BCTF grant to critically analyse BC's Education Plan and its implications for BC teachers. The inquiry quickly focused on the increased need for PD and a better method of delivery. Leveraging their diverse experience and expertise in teaching and educational technology, the team set to work on creating 21COPD. Since January 2012, the team has been collaborating on, producing and piloting webinars and OPD courses in their individual schools and



districts with great success.

## Marketing

A marketing campaign will be launched in Sept 2012. Electronic and paper brochures will be sent to all school and district PD coordinators and committees within the province as well as all BC Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs).

Members of the 21COPD team will be presenting at many local and district workshops in the 2012/2013 calendar year, including most of the BC PSA conferences.

A brief description and link to the 21COPD website is posted to both the Professional Development and Professional Inquiry pages of the BCTF website. In addition, several educational bloggers and other educational social media sites have reviewed and linked our site.

## Competition

Several free OPD ventures exist in the Edtech market, but few are tailored specifically for BC educators nor are they relevant to the reform initiatives of BC's Education Plan. The most comparable site to 21COPD, and the only one situated in BC is The Community of Expertise in Educational Technology (CEET).

## CEET

CEET is an active and rapidly growing community of practice in which educators share their resources and expertise in emerging educational technologies (ceet.ca). As a result, its focus is somewhat narrower than 21COPD. Although originally created and funded by the BC Ministry of Education, the community directs its growth (ceet.ca). Some of the features of this site include: CEET NING which enables members to create and organize digital resources, and CEET Meets, free online courses led by educators and hosted in Moodle and facilitated by Elluminate Collaborate (ceet.ca). CEET is a great resource and one recommended by and subscribed to by many members of the 21COPD team; however, its courses are often beyond the abilities of learners with limited technical competencies. 21COPD, on the other hand caters to learners with all levels of technical ability.

## The Ask

The 21COPD team has taken great pains to minimize costs by leveraging stable open source software such as Moodle, Big Blue Button and Wordpress. However, we still incur costs for webhosting, content development, site maintenance, and facilitator expenses. We are seeking funding to grow our venture and maintain our OER status. Please see our Business Plan for cost projections.

## The Return

21COPD offers no financial enrichment for investment as the team is committed to remaining an ad-free OER. However, investment will certainly enrich teaching and learning in BC.



# EVA – the Cube

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## 1. Market Focus

21COPD caters specifically to the BC K-12 market; however, many of its OPD courses and other resources are in keeping with global trends in education and technology integration that it could easily appeal to post-secondary market.

## 2. Types of Offerings

21COPD offers a variety of services and pre-packaged content.

### Services

- Free access to all resources with subscription
- Webinars which are archived for later access
- A comprehensive events calendar and links to relevant free and fee-based OPD opportunities worldwide
- Online Forums to support a Community of Practice Facilitators for blended workshops

### Content

- Online professional development courses
  - Courses are short, interactive modules which require learners to use new knowledge in practical applications
  - Courses are tailored to meet the needs of all levels of technical competencies and are relevant to all major BC curriculum subject areas and for all levels, elementary, secondary and adult education.

## 3. Who is the buyer?

Because 21COPD is an open educational resource, the buyer is the registered user even though no money changes hands. Opportunity for direct investment is currently available. Despite its status as an OER, 21COPD still incurs expenses and is currently seeking new sources of funding so it can grow. Likely investors for this venture include the Province in support of BC Ministry of Education Initiatives and the BCTF in support of the right to professional development of its members.

## 4. Global Target

Specifically, this venture is aimed at the BC K-12 market, but many of the resources could appeal across North American and other Anglophone countries with well-established internet infrastructures as all content will be provided in English and requires internet access.

## 5. Market Status

While some of the content may be specific to the BC curriculum, many of the 21COPD resources support global trends in the educational marketplace; therefore, it is possible this venture will attract subscribers from across the globe.



## 6. Competition

This venture has the potential to be disruptive to the current market as there is a long tradition of face-to-face PD workshops in BC. Even though OPD can offer more flexibility and other benefits than traditional PD, there is still likely to be resistance. However, 20COPD's facilitation services for blended PD may ease some of the resistance.

## Self-Reflection

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Since embarking on my own professional development journey in the MET program, I have had concerns about the deficiencies of PD offerings available to BC educators. As an Adult Educator, I am only allotted 3 PD days per year. The PD workshops I attend often leave me wanting and searching for personal relevance to my own practice. This assignment has inspired me to subscribe to several free OPD ventures so I can continue my personal PD journey as I near the end of the MET program.

While this venture is fictitious, I do believe it has potential for success, especially with the upcoming reforms promised by BC's Education Plan. I think my venture pitch does an adequate job of outlining the need for OPD in the face of systemic reform initiatives and provides a reasonable understanding of the shortcomings of traditional PD offerings to create systemic change.

Where this venture may fall short is in the numbers. Although I outline some of the costs associated with this venture, I did not provide specific dollar amounts for 'The Ask' or 'The Return'. In all honesty, I would not even know where to start.

## References

"BC's Education Plan." *BC Education Plan*. British Columbia, Ministry of Education, n.d. Web. 18 June 2012. <<http://www.bcedplan.ca/theplan.php>>.

CEET Community of Expertise in Educational Technology. (n.d.). *CEET Community of Expertise in Educational Technology*. Retrieved July 29, 2012, from <http://ceet.ca/>

