



ORIGINAL PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

Celebrating international collaboration: reflections on the first Virtual International Practice Development Conference

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Abstract

This article reports on the first Virtual International Practice Development Conference, held in May 2015 to celebrate International Nurses Day. The article describes key aspects of its planning, offers a flavour of the event itself and sets out an evaluation, including learning points and recommendations to assist with planning similar events in the future. Central to our learning are:

- The need for practice developers to grasp skills in technology associated with virtual space
- The need to embrace virtual space itself as another means by which creative and communicative spaces can be established for active learning and practice development activities
- The potential advantages that international virtual engagement has over face-to-face national or international engagement

The delivery of this virtual event made a significant international contribution to global practice development activity within the International Practice Development Collaborative and to enabling practice developers to connect and celebrate on a more global basis.

Implications for practice:

- Virtual space technology skills can assist with sharing and translating practice development research, innovations and critical commentary
- Virtual space can provide an adjunct to creative and communicative learning spaces
- Global networking opportunities can be developed and enhanced through the use of virtual space technology
- Practice developers need to role model the use of virtual technologies

Keywords: International, International Practice Development Collaborative, practice development, technology, virtual conference, innovation

Introduction

As a school of nursing in New South Wales, we had tussled for several years with the question of how to celebrate International Nurses Day in a way that would be inclusive of colleagues and students across our various campuses in the state. We wanted to do something over and above the usual ways in which this day is recognised and celebrated. One of the authors (MS) shared with colleagues her experience of participation both as a presenter and participant in the Virtual International Midwifery Conference (2012). The notion of real time, global conference participation from our own office, study

or bedroom anywhere in the world was exciting and thought provoking, despite being on a larger scale than our original statewide thinking. Taken with the idea, a few members of the university's school of nursing team considered this would be a new direction for a nursing conference and would make an original contribution to the remit of the International Practice Development Collaborative (IPDC). Our IPDC members, supported by our visiting professor – an IPDC founder member – agreed that this was a professional development opportunity that offered an excellent innovative platform to share practice development initiatives globally, cheaply, and in an inclusive and eco-friendly manner. Our planning finally resulted in the inaugural Virtual International Practice Development Conference (VIPDC) in May 2015, hosted over the 24 hours of International Nurses Day. It connected a community of practice developers across the globe and was a fantastic way to celebrate the day. While this is not the first virtual international conference, it is a first for the IPDC and for practice development in general. In this paper we share our organic development of the idea, the planning, delivery and some of the participant evaluation.

The aims of this article are to:

- Provide a context for the first VIPDC
- Set out the evaluation design and our findings
- Share a summary of our preparations for the event
- Share a summary of the event itself
- Summarise the learning emerging from the conference evaluation for the planning group, and the implications for the IPDC

Virtual spaces

Technological improvements have allowed us to meet, connect and engage online. The rapid development of personal computing and internet technology has greatly enhanced and diversified the use, uses, and usability of virtual space, particularly for learning (Salmon, 2009). Many of us are now familiar with newer forms of technology, beyond telephone or email, that enable us to connect and engage with others from a distance and to become immersed in learning opportunities. A virtual event involves interacting people, at a specific time and for a specific duration of time, sharing the same virtual environment on the web rather than meeting in a physical location (Sköld, 2012). When planned well, virtual events are highly interactive, and can even look and feel a lot like their physical counterparts. So, although connected by time and purpose, the VIPDC did not require any of us to be present at a particular location. This means conferences may no longer be required to occur in a physical space and although the technology is still in its infancy, there may have been progress towards what Kolb (2006, p 4) envisioned:

'It is hard to imagine that virtual reality could ever replace the experience we get walking in a city, or even walking outside at the theme park surrounded by the exhibit buildings, where our body movement, changes of perspective, the far horizon, the multiple lighting, the wind, and the surrounding crowd combine in an experience too rich for current simulations. Full body involvement in virtual reality is a long way off, but there is no reason to presume it is impossible, and there are plausible-seeming fictional descriptions of what it might be like, most famously in William Gibson's novels. Discussion about whether virtual spaces can be real places should not be limited to the current state of the art.'

For the VIPDC, we wanted to construct a real place in virtual space where presentations and conversations about practice development could take place; where deconstruction and co-construction could happen and where creativity (or an aesthetic) could thrive. In essence, we wanted to construct a virtual space for sharing and translating practice development research, innovations and critical commentary. We also wanted to make a small contribution to the longer-term vision set out by Kolb above.

The conference was promoted to potential participants in a number of ways:

- Via IPDC members
- Via a website created using a freely available 'Google Site' with html code that included metadata to enable search engines to list the site in a search for relevant search terms, such as 'practice development', 'nursing conference', 'international practice development conference', and so on. The website included information about the conference, an introductory video, information about the presenters and their presentation topics, the presentation schedule and links to help with the technology to be used in the conference.
- Through a promotional flyer that was produced and disseminated among known practice development interest groups and individuals
- Via social media:
 - A Twitter account ([@VIPDC15](#)) for the conference was used to disseminate links to the VIPDC website via the #vipdc15 hashtag
 - The VIPDC flyer and promotional video were posted to Facebook groups related to the IPDC and practice development

The conference website tinyurl.com/VIPDC-2015 contained help files and resource links for conference preparation.

The VIPDC was a hybrid conference that allowed remote participants to access live onsite sessions over a 24-hour period from their computers at work, at home or elsewhere. A hybrid event is one that combines a live 'in-person' event with a virtual online event. The conference was hosted entirely over the Internet by IPDC members from the University of Wollongong school of nursing. Participants accessed the conference through the conference website, which was set up specifically for the virtual experience. Once online and in the conference space, hosted in [Adobe Connect](#), participants entered a 'reception area' and were met by a facilitator to whom they could speak and post messages. Both facilitators and participants could see who was present, entering or leaving, and could engage in synchronous discussion via the chat space. Once it was time for a session to start, participants were guided into a presentation space on the site by the facilitator and the presenter began their session. During the sessions, participants saw a slide presentation or whatever had been prepared and could hear the presenter's voice. Participants could post chat and questions to the presenter, facilitator or other participants or, using the hand-raise icon, ask the presenter questions verbally. Various other interactive icons were also available for use. Participants were invited to evaluate, via an online survey tool, each session they attended. All this happened in real time.

Each session was recorded and, following the conference, a repository was set up where all the presentations and other resources could be accessed via the VIPDC website, at tinyurl.com/VIPDC-resources.

Evaluation methodology and methods

In practice development work, all projects and developments must be open to evaluation to assess their effectiveness and impact (Wilson and McCance, 2015). For any evaluation to be meaningful, evidence or data need to be collected, and the results collated, interpreted, reflected on and reported back to generate shared meanings in order to improve the learning experience and to ensure good match with expected outcomes. As this was the first VIPDC, we particularly wanted to provide an evaluation for IPDC members and others outside the collaborative, so that others could build on our experiences and learning.

As is the case in most constructivist evaluation, the evidence or data collected in our evaluation are mainly the experiential narrative or testimony of those involved in the (virtual) event or the organisational process. This testimony is of course subjective, context specific and value laden; however, each contribution is also a version of a truth. There is no single way to conduct constructivist

evaluation and no single truth, and it can be argued that the methodological principles are actually more important than any standardised methods. Therefore, we wanted to have an evaluation that was in keeping with the nine core practice development principles (McCormack et al., 2013, p 8), answered as far as possible any questions we had, and was practical given that we had no financial resource for this work other than the way we managed our own time and energies.

In constructivist research and development, evaluation is a form of applied and purposeful research or activity. In contrast to some of the principles underpinning other research methods, a constructivist approach allows the nature of evaluation to evolve so that it becomes a negotiation process that seeks a consensus on better informed and more sophisticated understanding. Data derived from constructivist evaluation represent simply construction, or views to be taken into account in the move towards consensus. The emergence of constructivist evaluation over the previous century has been explained by Guba and Lincoln (1989), who contend that a more informed and sophisticated approach to evaluation includes the human, political, social, cultural and contextual elements that are involved. Specifically, they propose what they term fourth-generation evaluation, to unite the evaluator with stakeholders in an interaction that creates the product of the evaluation. This approach took evaluation to another level at which negotiation is paramount, where the process and social dynamics take on greater importance. Indeed, Moreau and Clarkin (2012) describe that a hermeneutic dialectic process lies at the heart of fourth-generation evaluation. Moreover, during the process, all those connected to the evaluation are considered to some degree as stakeholders who have links with one another. Most importantly, this process gives equal footing to everyone, although critics argue the real power still lies with the evaluator. Koch (1994) notes that the reference points are the claims, concerns, and issues (CCIs) emerging from stakeholder self-interpretations. It is then down to the evaluator, in collaboration with the stakeholders, to synthesise the CCIs' data and to use these to influence the evaluation or actions post-evaluation. Guba and Lincoln (1989, p 40) describe CCIs in the following way:

'A claim is any assertion that a stakeholder may introduce that is favourable to the evaluand... a concern is any assertion that a stakeholder may introduce that is unfavourable to the evaluand...an issue is any state of affairs over which reasonable people may disagree.'

The evaluation methods that we adopted were:

- Collaborative narratives by members of the planning group
- An online survey for participants and presenters
- Social media data: Facebook and Twitter feedback and related content
- CCIs by the planning group before and after the virtual conference

Everyone wishing to participate in the virtual conference was asked to consent to be recorded and for any related material from the evaluation survey or social media to be included in the conference evaluation and reporting or publications. If consent was withheld they were unable to participate. We took advice from the university ethics committee on the consent matter, although we were not required to make a formal ethics application.

Findings

The narrative is a synthesised and combined version of individual narratives from the planning group members. It will also show some further detail in the conference planning.

Group narrative 1: Preparation of ourselves

Our first challenge was to identify the project team. We began with three willing and enthusiastic members of the group developed organically as a consequence of naturally occurring conversations in the workplace, in MS, AB and JD who clearly identified the 'what' and 'who' of the conference. It was the technical assistance that was lacking. This is where VN was invited and became crucial

in the identification and planning of the 'how'. As the plan emerged we also co-opted RM into the group as we needed to consider the 24-hour period of hosting of the conference and we wanted her to be part of the venture as the school's newest IPDC member.

Over the course of several further conversations, an outline plan emerged with clear aims. We sent out an initial communication to IPDC members to gauge support for the venture and received positive responses. Then the date was sent out for everyone to hold and promote. We then drafted a presentation list of 25 people active in different ways (at micro, mezzo and macro levels) taking into account different IPDC members, their organisations and different countries and continents. The response was overwhelmingly one of positivity and curiosity, and always supportive towards how, together, we would make this happen. The most common anxiety expressed to us was connected to technology. The challenge then for the planning team was to prepare ourselves so that we could competently and confidently support both presenters and participants, so we and they would be ready for event.

Deciding on titles of sessions and ideas about themes and content was the easy part as this was the same as creating a programme for any conference; the preparation and delivery was a whole new learning experience for all of us. We had to become familiar with the virtual conference space and decide on options and set-ups that would facilitate an engaging and smooth-running event, and enable a good learning experience for participants. First we crawled around in the space, we got lost, got shut off, switched off, and got excess static feedback – among other experiences. Then with practice and over time, we walked and even ran as we gained experience and became comfortable in the virtual space environment.

Once we had the IT platform and had set up the look of it we began by sitting together in the same room and running through the functions and amenities of the site. Then we progressed to all being in different rooms and then in different campuses and finally in different countries. At that point we really believed we could do it.

Narrative 2: Preparation of others

Members of the conference planning group held a number of practice sessions with the conference presenters to familiarise them with the conference interface and pre-empt any technological problems that might arise before or during their presentations. Each member took a country or two and connected with the presenters from those countries. This was particularly valuable for developing the confidence of those presenters who felt technologically challenged, and for identifying problems and developing solutions for technological incompatibilities of the presenters' own equipment, such as with microphones or web browser extensions, that might hinder presentation quality. The main challenge was ensuring that microphones and headsets were connected correctly.

We invited the presenters to submit their abstracts and presentation files in advance of the conference to enable adequate time for loading and testing them in the online conference space. We also opened up a practice room in the virtual space so that presenters could play around with the controls ahead of the conference. The success of this preparation strategy depended on presenters' collaboration with timelines and their competence to prepare presentation files that were functional in size and content for broadcast over an internet connection of variable quality across international locations. We found presenters needed explicit instructions in how to prepare their presentation files appropriately for this type of conference broadcast medium, and also in the use of headsets. Large presentations that include uncompressed image files, which might run effectively from a computer at a physical conference, would have created broadcast difficulties and so had to be edited to reduce the file size significantly. Headsets were essential for sound quality and elimination of background noise but some presenters did not know how to do connect them and some tried to use their inbuilt audio equipment, which caused connection problems.

Narrative 3: Preparation of the IT platform

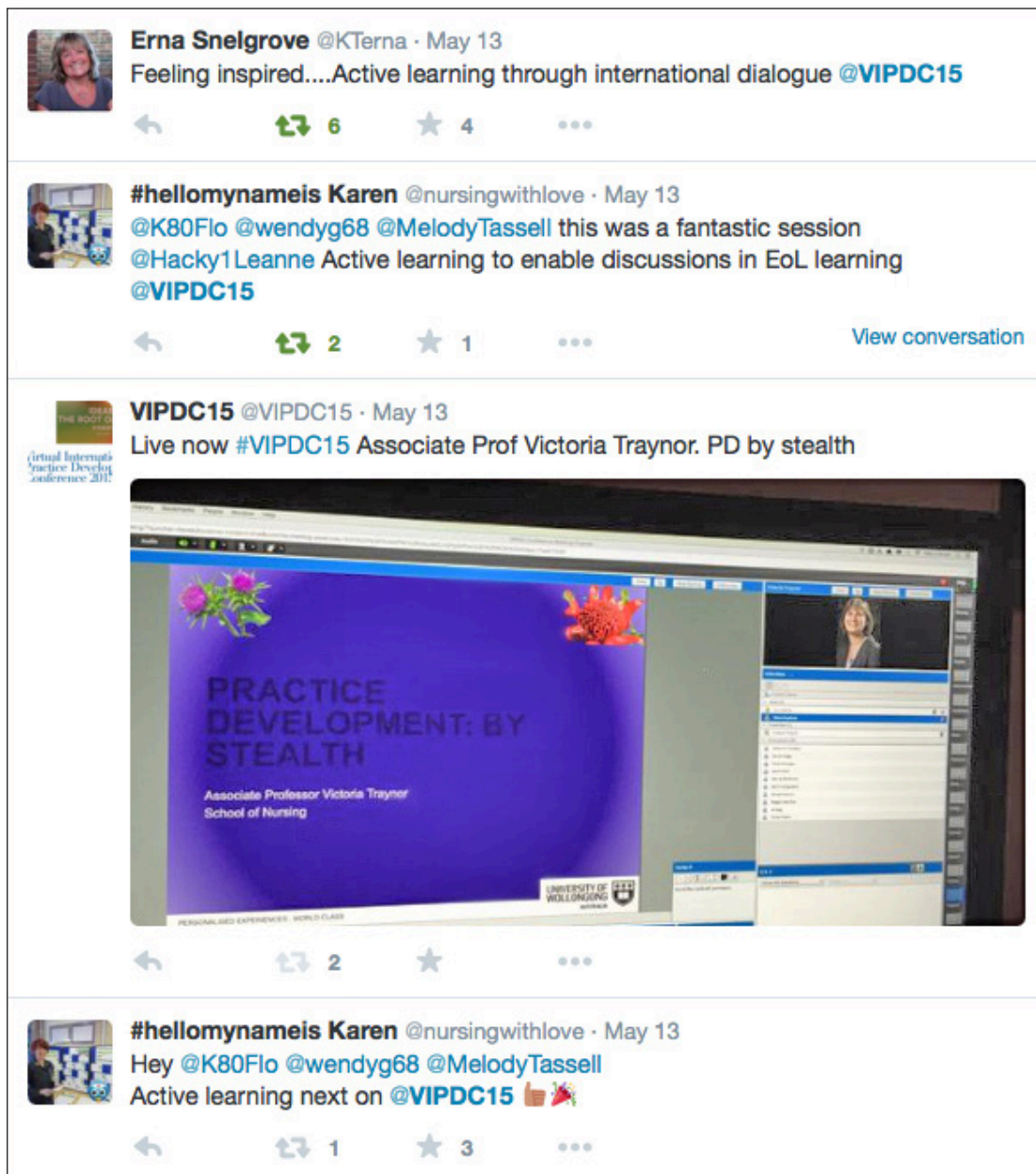
A goal of the conference was to enable access, financially and technologically, for all interested participants as well as presenters. This meant that the virtual conferencing technology needed to be cost free, with help and support available. We chose to proceed with Adobe Connect virtual conferencing technology because it was available, accessible via a web browser and supported by the host organisation, the University of Wollongong. However, we did learn that other webinar tools can perform similar functions. VN led the preparation of written and video 'how to' guides for participants and presenters to prepare them for how the conference interface would work. These guides and other preparatory information needed to be available on a website in advance of the conference.

We considered that the VIPDC website needed to provide information about the conference purpose, presentation abstracts and schedule, but also had to be available as an ongoing resource, with videos of the presentations, after the conference concluded. We set up a countdown to the conference clock and added tweets. We chose Google sites as the conference website host server because it met the conference purpose and was accessible beyond the host organisation's electronic firewall. We decided to limit the conference broadcast medium to audio only with presentation files, and exclude video as this would reduce bandwidth consumption and help prevent connection dropouts for areas with low bandwidth connections. The planning group had variable IT skill levels, but we were confident the members with advanced skills could coach the others and we committed to learning through doing.

Narrative 4: A flavour of the event

The virtual conference was planned as an online experience; a global coming together where distance and geography were inconsequential. This we achieved, but the experience of being immersed – of being totally engaged in the space in an emotional as well as an intellectual way so completely, and to such a depth – was somewhat unexpected. As at a conventional conference, people presented ideas and there was discussion and chat; like a conventional conference people chatted in between sessions and came and went. The un-reckoned was that like a conventional conference there was a lingering – but people could not actually hug or go to the bar to reflect on the day's event – so they simply lingered in the online space. The lingering was emotionally charged in some way. People did not want to leave. We were physically in our own homes and offices and countries separate from each other, yet we were connected by a powerful bond of a unique shared experience and going offline would sever that. The connections were not through the VIPDC meeting space alone but synchronously via Twitter and Facebook. Back channelling via Twitter was supportive and reflected the buzz; there were conversations, messages of support, back patting and shout-outs for live presentations.

Figure 1: Twitter screenshot – ‘VT Live now’



Groups who had gathered to watch as part of their International Nurses Day celebrations posted pictures and comments. Further feedback was live and retrospectively posted on Facebook as members of the IPDC shared their experiences of the event. The comments talked about the value of being able to connect and to share in this way, as well as the high quality and inspirational value of the presentations themselves.

The online survey for participants and presenters

We collected evaluation data from both participants and presenters in one set, something we may revise for future conferences. Data were sourced mainly from the registration form provided by conference participants and stored in the registration form spreadsheet on Google Drive. Registration data categories included 'name', 'email address', 'country', 'workplace', 'position', 'sessions', 'message' and 'recording consent'. A reply email was sent to participants' email address on submission of their registration form. This automated email, sent using the Google app FormMailer, was coded for

content specifically related to the VIPDC. The conference attracted 224 participants from 15 countries. However, we know that in some workplaces more than one person participated, so the real numbers were likely to have been closer to 300. Australia and the UK provided the most participants, with 63 and 69 respectively. However, when grouped by region, there were double the number of participants from Europe as from Australasia; this is not surprising considering the regions' relative nursing populations. Conference registration from other regions, such as the African and North American continents, was less significant by comparison.

The number of participants per session ranged from 13 to 65 individuals, or 6% to 29% of all participants. The mean number of participants across all sessions was 28 individuals, or 13% of all participants. Sessions during daytime working hours (8am-6pm local time) attracted the highest numbers from each region. Presenters from the northern hemisphere attracted more attendees (35 individuals, or 16% of all participants) than those from the southern hemisphere (23 individuals, or 10% of all participants). This may be a reflection of the larger numbers of nursing staff in northern hemisphere nations. Attendees also described the enabling of sharing and networking through the event as being immensely valuable. There were some challenges with streaming and other technology at a couple of points and this, too, was reflected in the feedback as it was disruptive for the presentation but it also interfered with the connection among participants. The overall flavour was that of a smorgasbord where the array of choices was set upon a cloth weaved from the threads of intellectual, emotional and humorous connectedness.

In addition, formal evaluation feedback was sought online using the [SurveyMonkey](#) tool. The survey sought to identify feedback for individual presentations in terms of the quality, usefulness and engagement of the presentation. A total of 177 responses were received. Evaluation of the conference identified that key learning for participants occurred in all sessions, and highly commended the organisation and quality of speakers. The learning described was personal but the overall quality, engagement and usefulness were rated highly by all respondents.

Social media data: Facebook and Twitter feedback and related content

Facebook and Twitter were more actively used to promote the VIPDC by some of the organising committee than others. The established IPDC Facebook page was used and the planning activities, promotional materials and registration information were posted, reaching the community of practice developers. All postings attracted a number of likes and comments, and the overall impression was positive. The availability of the post-conference recordings generating the most responses. The following is an example of a typical comment:

'This is fabulous, thank you so much to you... and the team for making this opportunity to listen at leisure available to all. What an invaluable resource, wow! Thank you' [various emojis inserted].

Figure 2: Facebook screenshot of AB closing the conference



The twitter feed was very helpful in the run-up to the conference in promoting and reminding participants of the 'when' and 'how to' of the event. The lively and loud tweeting during the conference, however, was fantastic. The twitterers tweeted and retweeted all the presentations, with comments and screenshots; the positivity towards practice development and the camaraderie for International Nurses Day were the two most striking outcomes from the Twitter activity. Groups who had gathered to watch as part of their International Nurses Day celebrations were active on the Twitter page. Further feedback was posted on Facebook, as members of the IPDC shared their experiences of the event. The comments talked about the value of being able to connect and to share in this way, as well as the high quality and inspirational value of the presentations themselves. The VIPDC2015 twitter account had 42 followers at the time of the conference. There were a total of 75 tweets during the conference, with 273 retweets and 81 likes.

Claims, concerns and issues (CCIs) by the planning group before and after the virtual conference

Table 1 on pages 14-16 sets out the complete CCIs as contributed by planning group members before and after the conference.

Unlike the usual CCI method, which is a social process carried out in the same physical space, we did this virtually in keeping with the event. Between us, we had no unresolved issues to prioritise and our co-existing multiple realities encountered during the experience we shared were set out. It can be seen that there were a large number of claims before and also after the event, suggesting that the overall experience was positive. Energy, enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism were commonly ascribed claims among the planning group. Varied skills were evident and a common passion for working in person-centred ways to promote practice development was central to the way in which the planning group worked with each other. A new set of claims in the 'after' list relating to social media can be seen. In relation to concerns before the event, voices expressed doubts about skills in the team, both in terms of the technology aspect and of the group's ability to deliver the whole event as it was a massive undertaking for a group that had not delivered anything like this or on this scale before. After the event, concerns shifted away from the planning group and its ways of working to the actual event and how others participated. There were relatively low numbers of issues considering the scale of the event. The core issues before and after the event are set out in Table 1c.

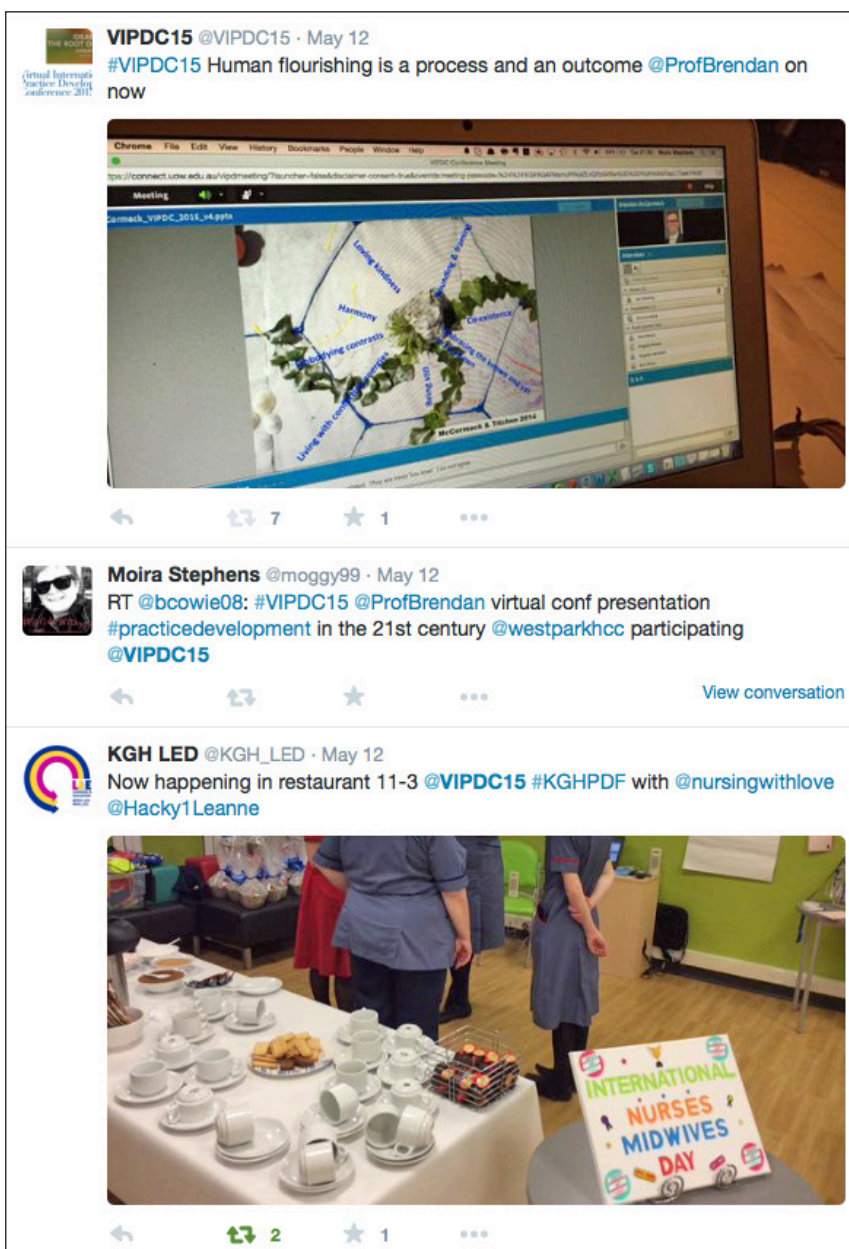
Discussion: constructing shared meanings around learning

The delivery of this virtual event makes a significant international contribution to global practice development activity within the IPDC, and to enabling practice developers to connect and celebrate on a more global basis. Our discussion here will consider three core aspects:

- The need to embrace virtual space
- Practice developers' skills in technology associated with virtual space
- The potential advantages that international virtual engagement has over face-to-face national or international engagement

As a planning group, the key challenges from undertaking the VIPDC were around how to share our learning from the conference more widely with our colleagues locally and internationally in order to contribute to flourishing, how to build the required technology skills for future events and engage others more proactively in this, and how to consider and plan evaluation from the outset.

Figure 3: Twitter screenshot - human flourishing (McCormack, 2015)



Key learning points that emerged were that planning the evaluation early on is essential, as is advocated in practice development principles as critical (Wilson and McCance, 2015), since it facilitates clarity, cohesion and strategic intent and direction. Evaluation from the outset is thoughtful and can help ensure the values of collaboration through inclusion and participation remain central in the processes. Making technology accessible and not fearing it can be challenging but are well worth the effort and outcome, as we discovered. Encouraging participants, presenters and ourselves to engage with the technology and prepare in advance is critical to smooth running and a stress-free, positive energy during the event. We feel we offered a significant amount of coaching and support to presenters to enable them to feel more confident in delivering a virtual presentation. Sharing learning can be challenging to hearts and ears that are not open, so it is important to develop deliberate strategies for engaging others in our professional setting and sharing learning so that it is meaningful for others. Doing so also builds capacity for future events.

The team believes that the process is a very rewarding undertaking and is translatable into other contexts. The challenges of travel and cost are eliminated, producing opportunities for greater involvement by a wider audience. International conversations during and between sessions made further use of the technology, creating a sense of networking that was inclusive for all. Without concern for appearance or position, the platform creates an equality that allows participants to ask questions they may not feel comfortable asking in a face-to-face conference. So the practice development principles of inclusivity, participation and collaboration are enhanced. The team members believed they were given an opportunity to be courageous, and were appreciative of the initial response and ongoing support from the IPDC. However, we are unsure if we would have achieved a similar outcome had we not already had developed working relationships in place.

This was, as far as we are aware, the first time an online international conference has been offered in practice development. Sessions from presenters based in the northern hemisphere attracted the most participants. However, the attendance data overall reveals that only a small percentage (between 6% and 29%) attended each session of the entire conference. This suggests that something intervened between participants' intention to participate in all the conference and their actual attendance. An obvious reason would be the need for sleep or family responsibilities or that, as is the case in 'placed' conferences, participants selected what sessions they wanted to participate in. This may be one of the main disadvantages of this sort of conferencing, although it may also suggest that participants have greater flexibility at a virtual conference. Exploration of literature about the attendance rate at other professional development virtual conferences might offer insight into factors that might have affected the attendance at VIPDC sessions and help organisers to understand these for any subsequent conferences. The VIPDC information website highlighted that session recordings would be available after the conference had ended, and knowledge of this resource might have discouraged participation in the live sessions. Some participants might have found it more convenient to their own schedule to view the presentation recordings or to audit the recordings to determine their interest in the presenter's topic. A short follow-up survey would have helped to clarify these points but on this occasion we lacked the time to do this. We have however, developed a number of recommendations relating to the technology, which are set out in Table 2 on page 16. These may be of assistance to the IPDC or to others planning virtual similar events in the future.

The most common concern we heard expressed was a lack of competence and confidence with the technology. Consequently, we feel that practice developers internationally need to learn more about virtual space and the technologies associated with it, and how it can be used in practice development activities and to connect more effectively on a global level. This is something on which IPDC members should be providing leadership. A particular challenge for us will be to feel comfortable with the aesthetic aspects of virtual space. However, in keeping with Sköld's (2012) observation, at present we do not know if the aesthetics of virtual space are something different to the aesthetics of physical space. Further, for those practice developers in education and learning and developments roles, the design of active learning in virtual spaces may also need further exploration. We should take heed and heart from Kaye's (2009) argument that communicative action, reflexivity and praxis are productive tools for a critical creative practice in both physical and virtual spaces. Kaye further argues that the internet can be used to construct social spaces and, in conjunction with creativity, has the capacity to develop diverse and ethical communicative contexts.

To summarise, our learning from our evaluation has three core aspects; first, a need for practice developers to grasp skills in technology associated with virtual space; secondly, the need to embrace virtual space itself as another means by which creative and communicative spaces can be established for active learning and practice development activities and finally, further exploration of the potential that international virtual engagement has over face to face national or international engagement.

Conclusion

In this article we have set out the context of the inaugural VIPDC and shared some of our learning. We have also shared a summary of our preparations for the event, as well as some details of the event itself. Finally, we have summarised the learning emerging from the conference evaluation for the planning group as well as the implications for the IPDC and others. The collective experience of the authors (MS, JD, VN, AB and RM) contributed to the success of the conference and offered a new and innovative celebration of International Nurses Day. It was both challenging and exhilarating to visualise this innovative conference, sustain our efforts, and then deliver the event itself. We have aimed to summarise our learning in this article, and this offers many tips for others who might follow in our footsteps. We also continue to pose questions to ourselves and others thinking of going the same way. One of the most powerful of these is, 'knowing what we know now would we do this again?' The group's unanimous answer is 'yes, we would'. We would equally encourage others to consider virtual space technology for enhancing practice development, especially for knowledge translation activities. In addition, an adjunct to creative and communicative learning spaces is suggested. Through VIPDC participation, opportunities for new and existing international connections and for global networking have been enhanced.

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Table 1a: Claims, concerns and issues before and after VIPDC

CLAIMS	
Before	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning group is enthusiastic • Small planning group • IT knowledge seems appropriate in some of team • Share a similar idea and vision for the event • Good event for the school to be leading on • Great way to signal that UOW is part of IPDC and playing an active role • IPDC members generally supportive and contributed as requested • Great way for international networking to take place • Feels like an innovative adventure • Team members seems engaged and enthusiastic • Good cooperation and support • It's OK to ask questions • Team members have the connections to invite speakers relevant to the conference focus • UOW Connect Lounge, the local portal for Adobe Connect, appears to provide a useful platform at no cost. It will cope with the number of participants we anticipate; whereas WebEX through UOW cannot • UOW Connect Lounge is free with tech support available for meeting construction • There are lots of Adobe Connect help resources available for meeting builders and participants • A conference information website will provide a focus for conference advertising, stimulation of interest and participant technology preparation • Help resources should enable the conference members (hosts, presenters and attendees) to manage the technology • Energy and enthusiasm at high levels in the planning • Commitment high in planning group, speakers and potential participants • Excellent way to dissolve geographical and temporal boundaries • Great way to bridge workspaces and connect individuals • Professional knowledge of each other and ways of working made it easy to work together • Passion for the idea is evident • Innovation and willingness to take a risk in a new forum seems to be shared by all team members • Feels like a great opportunity to engage the practice development community more widely and accessibly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of support on the day • Great way for international networking to take place • Feels like an innovative adventure • High level of engagement and excitement about the event by team and participants • Felt that there was always someone else there if I needed anything • Lots of celebration and recognition/praise offered within the team and to the team • Twitter activity was good • Enthusiasm of participants and hosts for this innovative way of sharing ideas and networking was very evident in their chat comments, live voice comments and Twitter comments • Creating the conference website on Google sites enables the site to be an accessible, long-term resource without web-hosting costs • Conference website provides a web presence to signify innovation in the field of practice development • Video recordings of presentations enable sharing of ideas beyond the duration of the conference itself • The inability of some presenters to meet submission deadlines of their abstracts, bios and photos hindered the timely development of both the conference website and the conference meeting site • Ignorance of UOW IT support in relation to some basic questions about server storage size for Adobe Connect meetings hindered adequate planning and preparation, especially in terms of advice to presenters about their presentation file size • Felt very supported by the team –organising team, speakers and participants • Palpable commitment – if that makes sense! • A real sense of connection with everybody who was logged in at any time • Presenters who had visited and/or practised in the space in advance seemed to have a much better experience and smoother presentation than those who had not • Great level of online chat • Online support great before and during event

Table 1b: Claims, concerns and issues before and after VIPDC

CONCERNS	
Before	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership and drivers in the team • Planning skills in the team • Completion/finishing capabilities in the team • Planning group may be too small • Being away from the school and face-to-face contact for a long period of time • Some IPDC members will not actively promote the event • Biggest hurdle will probably be IT skills of those in any role in the conference for managing audio and web browser requirements • Preparation is needed - time and planning are factors • Publicity and marketing for participants • The practice sessions weren't always smooth. Speakers had several IT challenges • Anxiety about the IT failing or something happening that hadn't been anticipated or rehearsed • 'How to' guides specific to this conference rather than generic Adobe Connect resources will need to be developed for each type of conference activity for hosts, presenters and attendees • Concern about internet bandwidth available in different countries and locations means that a live view of the presenter using video streaming will have to be replaced by a static photo of presenter with live audio. This may be less exciting to attendees, but it will make conference more accessible for those with bandwidth problems • Preparation by speakers • Lack of meetings with planning group • Adobe Connect limited to 300 participants at any one time • Engagement by some speakers in familiarising themselves with the online preparation • Publicity of event and how it would reach those engaged in practice development activities or otherwise interested • Would anyone log in and participate??? (besides us!) • Maintaining energy throughout the 24 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity and marketing for participants • The ability of the platform to cope with large presentations and video/YouTube links • Poor participation by some (senior) members in the school • Evaluation planning and commencing it earlier • It was evident that some presenters had not prepared for the technological requirements of their presentation by reading the 'how to' guides provided to them or by attending the online practice sessions • Taking part in practice sessions using the technology contributed to presenters' successful sessions • Some presentation files were too large (>20MB), which created problems with conversion for use on the Adobe Connect meeting space. These large files were the result of presenters' lack of IT skills in resizing and resampling of large image files within their presentations. Presenter instructions in future will need to include a direction to seek IT assistance with creating presentation files of suitable size or links to online instructions. But how to get presenters (or other conference participants) to take seriously the need to follow these instructions? • The need to reduce bandwidth problems by not including video broadcast was apparently not conveyed to presenters effectively, as several presenters chose to use video (or links to online video) in their presentations. Consequently, confusion and problems arose in with getting videos to play in attendees' browser window rather than presentation window. Presenter instructions will need to emphasise this issue • Twitter and social media concurrent activity • Timeliness of submitting presentations • Speakers who did not have an opportunity to practice and engage in the space prior to the conference had greater challenges • Participant engagement throughout the whole 24 hours – some hours very active, others not

Table 1c: Claims, concerns and issues before and after VIPDC

ISSUES (*step 1 write out the questions you have formed in your head; step 2 look at your concerns and turn them into questions a 'reasonable' person might ask*)

Before	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well will we deliver this event? • How effectively will we work together as a group? • How much support will there be from across IPDC? • How will our IT skills fare? • How can we increase engagement by presenters before the event? • How can we ensure support for presenters throughout the entire 24 hours? • How can we increase publicity and commitment to the event before it begins? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we share our learning in the school? • Is Abode Connect the best platform? • How do we ensure that more senior people (leaders) in the school are signed up to IPDC activities for the future? • How do we prepare for next time? • How can we publicise the event more widely? • In choosing an appropriate web conferencing platform, how do we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – prioritise bandwidth accessibility versus presentation flexibility? – consider cost and which organisation will pay? – consider users' technological requirements? – accommodate large numbers of attendees? • How do we encourage conference participants to prepare their use of the required technologies in advance? • How should we have planned our evaluation from the initial meeting?

Table 2: Recommendations for website embedded technology and evaluation data collection

1. Set **Country** variable as a dropdown menu list of likely countries. Provide an 'Other country' text entry variable for participants to enter a country that may not be in the drop-down menu list of countries. This will eliminate the variation in country entries and their spelling that was encountered in the current registration process
2. Include variable 'Gender' as polychotomous choice variable (male/female/trans/intersex)
3. Set **Workplace** variable to a dropdown menu list of specific common locations for practice development practitioners and educators, such as 'University', 'Hospital', 'Health service' or others that the VIPDC organising committee can identify. This will eliminate the variation in entries and make analysis more meaningful
4. Set **Position** variable to a dropdown menu list of common position titles that might help to distinguish between practice development practitioners, educators or researchers. This will eliminate the variation in entries and make analysis more meaningful
5. Add a variable **Health profession** to a dropdown menu list to identify the range of health professional groups interested enough in practice development to attend the conference. This could add some interesting insights into the attendance data analysis
6. The VIPDC organising committee should debate the advantages and disadvantages of informing participants of the availability of session videos after the conference. More participants might attend the conference live if they value the conference content but are unaware that they can watch it later. Conference recordings then become an opportunity to revisit sessions of interest
7. Utilise an assistant who can integrate data from different sources (such as UOW Adobe Connect meeting attendee reports and participant data reports) for meaningful analysis. This may provide a more comprehensive analysis for evaluation
8. Carry out a literature review of factors affecting virtual conference participation