



# TLEF Project – Final Report

Report Completion Date: (2020/04/28)

## 1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 1.1. General Information

<b>Project Title:</b>	Strengthening Dissertation and Thesis Proposals through the Creation of Online Theory and Method Modules		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Deirdre M. Kelly		
<b>Report Submitted By:</b>	Deirdre M. Kelly		
<b>Project Initiation Date:</b>	April 1, 2018	<b>Project Completion Date:</b>	March 31, 2020
<b>Project Type:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Large Transformation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Other: [please specify]		

### 1.2. Project Focus Areas – Please select all the areas that describe your project.

- Resource development (e.g. learning materials, media)
- Infrastructure development (e.g. management tools, repositories, learning spaces)
- Pedagogies for student learning and/or engagement (e.g. active learning)
- Innovative assessments (e.g. two-stage exams, student peer-assessment)
- Teaching roles and training (e.g. teaching practice development, TA roles)
- Curriculum (e.g. program development/implementation, learning communities)
- Student experience outside the classroom (e.g. wellbeing, social inclusion)
- Experiential and work-integrated learning (e.g. co-op, community service learning)
- Indigenous-focused curricula and ways of knowing
- Diversity and inclusion in teaching and learning contexts
- Open educational resources
- Other: [please specify]



### 1.3. Project Summary

This project involved the design and production of 12 online theory and research method modules, building on best practices from the blended learning literature and incorporating mixed-media methods of engagement. This set of modules has inaugurated an online resource library housed within the Department of Educational Studies but open to any UBC student with a CWL. The modules have been designed to strengthen the learning experience of students, particularly those at the critical stage in their graduate programs when they have completed most of their coursework and are writing their research proposal. To this end, for example, each module includes activity and assignment suggestions that draw upon the specific tasks involved in thesis proposal and dissertation writing. The project’s overarching purpose has been to provide graduate students with opportunity to define their research and identify theories and methods that will assist in timely dissertation or thesis completion. It has also resulted in a structure, a set of guidelines, and exemplars that will enable the online resource library to be self-sustaining, so that faculty members can add or update modules into the future.

### 1.4. Team Members – Please fill in the following table and include **students**, undergraduate and/or graduate, who participated in your project.

Name	Title/Affiliation	Responsibilities/Roles
Deirdre Kelly	Professor/EDST	Project manager
Tamara Baldwin	EdD student/EDST	Modules coordinator/contributor to module
David Romero	PhD student/EDST	Co-author of module
Sonia Medel	PhD student/EDST	Co-author of module
Mazia Syed	Undergrad student/Arts	Project assistant – video editing, transcription
Raghav Aggarwal	Undergrad student/Arts	Project assistant – video editing, transcription
Vladimir Chindea	Undergrad student/Arts	Project assistant – video editing, transcription
Amanda Bolderston	EdD Student/EDST	Contributor to module
Gina Buchanan	EdD Student/EDST	Contributor to module
Karina Younk	EdD Student/EDST	Contributor to module
Please also note: A number of EDST (and other) faculty members volunteered their time to create the scholarly content for the modules. In alphabetical order: Shauna Butterwick, Prof. Emerita Dr. Heidi Janz, Univ. of Alberta Deirdre Kelly, Prof. André Mazawi, Prof. Bathseba Opini, Instructor Sam Rocha, Assoc. Prof.		



Kjell Rubenson, Prof. Emeritus Claudia Ruitenberg, Prof. Hongxia Shan, Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Smythe, Assoc. Prof., SFU Tom Sork, Prof. Michelle Stack, Prof. Alison Taylor, Prof. Jude Walker, Assistant Prof.		
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**1.5. Courses Reached** – Please fill in the following table with **past**, **current**, and **future** courses and sections (e.g. HIST 101, 002, 2017/2018, Sep) that have been/will be reached by your project, including courses not included in your original proposal (you may adapt this section to the context of your project as necessary).

Course	Section	Academic Year	Term (Summer/Fall/Winter)
EDST 580	(Mina Taheri)	2019-2020	W1
EDST 580	(Christine Stewart)	2018-2019	S2
EDST 580	(Leslie Johnson)	2017-2018	S2

Note: The online modules are not meant as courses, but they can be incorporated into Directed Study courses. The Qualitative Research Interviewing module was a pilot for this project and has been used in part or in full by the above doctoral students as a Directed Study under the supervision of the PI, Deirdre Kelly.

**2. OUTPUTS AND/OR PRODUCTS**

**2.1.** Please **list** project outputs and/or products (e.g. resources, infrastructure, new courses/programs). Indicate the current location of such products and provide a URL if applicable.

Product(s)/Achievement(s):	Location:
Qualitative Research Interviewing (double module)	<a href="https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/">https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/</a> ***
Educational Policy Analysis (double module)	<a href="https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/">https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/</a> ***
Autobiographical Inquiry	<a href="https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/">https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/</a> ***
Pierre Bourdieu: A Select Introduction to His Work	<a href="https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/">https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/</a> ***
Developing a Dissertation	<a href="https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/">https://thesismodules.edst.educ.ubc.ca/</a> ***
Introduction to Practice Theories	Coming soon – COVID-19 delayed launch
Evaluation Research	Coming soon – in final production
Introduction to Critical Theories	Coming soon – in final production
Public Scholarship	Half-way completed
Global South theorists	Half-way completed
Latin American theorists	Planning stage

\*\*\* This URL may change as we finalize the location of the library on the EDST website



2.2. Item(s) Not Met – Please list intended project outputs and/or products that were not attained and the reason(s) for this.

Item(s) Not Met:	Reason:
Not applicable	

3. PROJECT IMPACT

3.1. Project Impact Areas – Please select all the areas where your project made an impact.

- Student learning and knowledge
- Student engagement and attitudes
- Instructional team teaching practice and satisfaction
- Student wellbeing, social inclusion
- Awareness and capacity around strategic areas (indigenous, equity and diversity)
- Unit operations and processes
- Other: [please specify]

3.2. What were you hoping to change or where were you hoping to see an impact with this project? – Please describe the intended benefits of the project for students, TAs, instructors and/or community members.

We foresaw these direct benefits to graduate students: 1) increased opportunities to deepen their knowledge about theories, methods, or both relevant to their intended research; 2) the possibility of strengthening their MA thesis or doctoral dissertation proposals; 3) access to an increased range of perspectives through resources in the online library; 4) an increased range of possible research supervisors known to students through the faculty lecture notes and video appearances incorporated into modules; and 5) a potentially shortened time to program completion if modules are used—in conversation with faculty members—to structure the proposal writing stage of the students’ programs.

We also anticipated that faculty members in the department supervising magistral and doctoral students might also benefit. Once an online library of modules exists, students could work with their supervisors to put together a Directed Study course tailored to their individual project needs; this would alleviate some work for the supervisors, while ensuring a rigorous course of study. Currently within the Department of Educational Studies, the MA, EdD, and PhD programs all incorporate elements of writing proposals and dissertations/theses into required research courses (e.g., literature reviews, writing a problem statement, pre-proposals, small-scale data analysis). And many instructors integrate research skills and tasks inherent in writing a thesis or dissertation into their courses. However, faculty members across EDST come from many different disciplines (e.g., history, philosophy, sociology) and fields (e.g., school leadership, adult and higher education). As a result, they have diverse expectations for what a proposal, dissertation, and thesis



might look like. Thus, even though students may have been exposed to thesis and dissertation tasks and skills in their coursework, they will likely still have a significant amount of work to do to meet the expectations of their actual supervisors. Rather than be left to bridge this potential gap in an unstructured way, the modules will be an alternative: students can work individually with their supervisors to design individualized Directed Study courses.

We anticipated that another direct and sustainable benefit to module instructors is that those without experience teaching online might have the opportunity to learn firsthand about blended approaches. Once the modules have been developed, other instructors will have high-quality examples to examine and, ideally, take inspiration from. As they work with students to draw from modules to create directed study courses, they may see “proof of concept”; this, in turn, may give them the knowledge and confidence to incorporate more online learning into their own course planning and preparation.

**3.3. Were these changes/impacts achieved? How do you know they occurred?** – *What evaluation strategies were used? How was data collected and analyzed? You are encouraged to include copies of data collection tools (e.g. surveys and interview protocols) as well as graphical representations of data and/or scenarios or quotes to represent and illustrate key themes.*

While the production of some of the modules are ongoing due to a combination of technical lags (e.g., faculty members checking video transcriptions) and scheduling of faculty members to film, given their teaching and research schedules and, most recently, COVID-19, we have been unable to conduct a final **summative** evaluation of all the modules. Nevertheless, we used a number of **formative** evaluation strategies. The three most significant to date have been:

- In October 2018, we sought preliminary feedback on pilot modules from students, alumni, and faculty on EdD Management Committee at a meeting as well as the weekend-long EdD Institute (current EdD students and alumni and faculty in attendance). The feedback was very positive, with no to minimal input for revision.
- In March 2019, at an annual writing retreat for EdD, PhD, and MA students in EDST, we introduced students to the modules that were complete at that time and invited them to make use of the modules in order to provide feedback on the ease of use and ask about desired future content. The primary purpose of this evaluation session was to publicize the modules, but comments and questions indicated a keen interest and gratitude for the creation of the modules.
- In October 2019, at an Institute where EdD graduate students and instructors were gathered, at a session dedicated to this purpose, we administered a survey to 17 students and 2 faculty members to gather feedback on: 1) how they perceived the value of the learning activities, assignments, resources, etc.; 2) any issues/problems they encountered in the module; and 3) any suggestions for improvement they might have. At this stage, we had 4 complete modules, and we left it to participants to select the one(s) that interested them the most. Upon completion of the survey, we also co-facilitated a group discussion.



Feedback from the survey was consistently positive, with the exception of flagging technical glitches and difficulty logging into the library (which we have since fixed). We include here some quotes to illustrate key themes:

**Theme: the library of modules enhances student learning**

“This is such an invaluable resource. What a great idea! The investment of time and creativity your team has placed into this initiative will encourage and foster ongoing learning. The modules are easy to follow and well balanced with audio and text applications.”

“Once registered and enrolled, the module was very easy to navigate and use. Quality of videos were excellent. Really, really love the written transcription with videos.”

“Exceeded my expectations in terms of depth and breadth covered of the topic.”

“I appreciate the additional readings and resources often provided below the main videos for those who want to delve deeper.”

“Each module would be useful at various stages—even at the very outset [of graduate study]—so that students can have the language and familiarity with concepts/theories/methods etc. to begin conversations with potential committee members. These would be useful for face-to-face courses where the instructor can ‘flip’ the classroom.”

“Very useful! We learn a lot in the course work in a very compressed timeframe, so retaining the major theories, philosophies, and concepts is difficult and feels overwhelming. Modules are excellent refreshers and tools for further reflection.”

**Theme: good user experience (visually appealing layout, easy to navigate, inclusive, accessible)**

“Excellent. Large graphic/picture tiles are easy to click on :-)”

“Easy to navigate, user-friendly, appealing.”

“[The most positive aspect]: Accessible at any time during our research process.”

“It was well laid out and it was easy to see all of the modules available.”

“I liked how the video had the narration on the side and you could go directly to a certain part of the video.”

**Theme: useful curricular content and requests for more**

“Really liked it, well laid out, lots of support materials and questions for further reflection.”

“[The most positive aspect]: Accessibility to educational materials that are important to my research activities.”

“Someday you might have more advanced material on the same subjects.”

“I look forward to future modules.”

“Add more!”

**Theme: aesthetic, clear design**

“It captured my interest aesthetically. It looks inviting and modern.”

**Theme: the login process from website to EdX Edge modules needs simplifying**

“Needs to be easier to get to and to login. Did figure it out [eventually].”

“It was a bit of effort to log in but worked out with a couple of iterations.”

**3.4. Dissemination** – Please provide a list of **past** and **upcoming** scholarly activities (e.g. publications, presentations, invited talks, etc.) in which you or anyone from your team have shared information regarding this project.

We haven't (yet) disseminated the project through scholarly activities. It would be interesting to try to assess after a few years the impact of this project on its longer-term goal, namely helping graduate students to finish their academic programs in a timely manner.

**4. TEACHING PRACTICES** – Please indicate if **your** teaching practices or those of **others** have changed as a result of your project. If so, in what ways? Do you see these changes as sustainable over time? Why or why not?

I (Deirdre Kelly, PI) have learned about what works well in a blended learning environment, and I have incorporated more mixed-media methods of engagement into my teaching. I have also been able to rely on some of the modules we have in our new library, incorporating them into the planning of directed study courses I have agreed to supervise with graduate students. With the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have had to move face-to-face courses online. I do so now with more confidence and understanding of what constitutes good online pedagogical practice (including good resources) as we plan for, transition to, and facilitate teaching in online-only learning environments for the foreseeable future.

I asked faculty members who created modules for this online resource if they wanted to comment. Here are replies that I received:

“This is my first experience with the creation of an online module; it allowed me to consider ways to build resources that enrich student experiences beyond the classroom, and which could support students in their different projects. I intend to integrate these resources—from the range of modules now available—into my teaching of the doctoral methodological courses I teach, such as EDST 601B and EDST 508A, for the PhD and EdD, respectively.” (Dr. André Mazawi, author of *Pierre Bourdieu* module)

“Planning and producing the video vignettes and accompanying PowerPoints in Lightboard forced me to think more clearly about how the technology can be better integrated into my teaching—whether I am using the resources in a blended- or fully-online format. I have told these stories many times in face-to-face classes but now have them in “modular” and digital forms, which substantially increases their usefulness to me and, I hope, to others.” (Dr. Tom Sork, author of *Evaluation Research* module)

“Creating the modules has required thinking about learning objectives and methods of achieving them in a more deliberate way. It has also provided an opportunity to collaborate with faculty colleagues and to learn more about their work. I look forward to utilizing the modules I was involved in, as well as others', in my teaching and supervision, especially with EdD students.” (Dr. Alison Taylor, co-author of *Introduction to Practice Theories* module)



“Creating one of these modules deepened my understanding of the pedagogical value and power of a dialogic approach to teaching, in particular, to supervising doctoral students. In the development of my module on autobiography, I contacted EdD graduates who had used this approach in their doctoral research and invited them to reflect on the process of self-inquiry. Our exchanges and their insights brought life to the information provided. Creating the module also deepened my skills in using online technology and multi-media, specifically video. An interview with one of my EdD students who was in the midst of writing an autobiographical dissertation was videotaped and became an important part of the module.” (Dr. Shauna Butterwick, author of *Autobiographical Inquiry* module)

**5. PROJECT SUSTAINMENT** – *Please describe the sustainment strategy for the project components. How will this be sustained and potentially expanded (e.g. over the next five years). What challenges do you foresee for achieving the expected long-term impacts listed above?*

I (Deirdre Kelly, PI) have met with the Department of Educational Studies’ Web and Communications Coordinator, who has created the structure for accessing the online module library. This staff person has taken on the responsibility of managing the site, creating FAQs, and a video on how to log in, as we go forward. For the next 2 years, I continue in the role as Chair of the EdD Management Committee, the program that provided the original impetus for the project. With the impending retirement of the Academic Coordinator of the EdD, I am seeking to revise the duties and responsibilities of the position to include the following:

- Coordinate with Chair and work with faculty members, EDST staff person (Web & Communications Coordinator), and an instructional designer in Educational Technology Support (ETS) to maintain, update, and add to the Online Thesis Modules hosted on the EDST website
- Create, or direct others to create, podcasts, blogs, and other social media to highlight the program and research conducted by students in the program, including existing and emerging online modules

We also plan to build the periodic updating and maintenance costs into the departmental EdD Learning Enhancement Fund or EdD operating budget. As the TLEF project ends, we have built significant capacity for creating new modules (e.g., “Module One-Pager” and “EdD Module Development Guidelines”), as the evolving needs and interests of students and faculty dictate. As mentioned under Project Impact, we think the high-quality, professionally designed modules will inspire faculty lacking experience with online teaching to explore blended approaches. Given that faculty members “volunteer” their time to create and curate the modules, we foresee one or, at most, two new ones coming online per year.

**Challenges for achieving the expected long-term impacts listed above:**

One challenge will be reminding faculty and students that the online resource is available once the immediate “buzz” of the official launch fades from memory. Given that numerous EDST faculty members have created modules (see list above), however, there is a more substantial awareness of the online library, and ideally this will lead to the modules being suggested as a resource or reference in their classes or supervision of students.

Faculty members are busy; asking them to create new online modules, which is over and above their regular workload, can be understandably challenging. Under the TLEF, we were able to offer research assistance as an incentive, and the team spent time brainstorming and scaffolding people’s efforts, occasionally treating them to a meal or drink in our oversight or curation roles. These “human touches” are vitally important yet time-consuming and may get neglected as time goes on.