

# ISW

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## *Instructional Skills Workshop*



Delivered by Camosun College at  
Universidad Politécnica de Tlaxcala  
Tlaxcala, Mexico  
November 2011

Linda Edmond (BEST), Mavis Smith (ELD), Elizabeth West (ELD)





# Instructional Skills Workshop

Taller de Habilidades Docentes  
para los maestros de la UPT

El taller, **Instructional Skills Workshop**, es impartido por tres instructoras certificadas y maestras en ejercicio en el Camosun College, en Victoria Canada.

se llevará a cabo en las instalaciones del CIIDEN

**los días 24 al 27 de noviembre**

jueves de 8:30 a 14:00;

viernes y sábado de 9:00 a 17:30

con dos horas de comida de 13:45 a 15:45

domingo de 8:30 a 14:30

Se trabaja con principios de la educación para adultos y la microenseñanza y esta fundamentado en el constructivismo, el cual se alinea perfectamente con el modelo educativo por competencias. Es totalmente activo, es decir, los maestros aprenden haciendo y son retroalimentados por los facilitadores y sus pares en el taller.



**El cupo es de 15 maestros**

**Instructional Skills Workshop Report**  
**Camosun College and the Universidad Politécnica de Tlaxcala**  
**November 24 – 27, 2011**  
**Ciudad de Tlaxcala, Tlaxcala, Mexico**

**Introduction**

The Camosun College Learning and Teaching Centre recently collaborated with the Universidad Politécnica de Tlaxcala (UPT) in Tlaxcala, the capitol city of the state of Tlaxcala, Mexico in offering an Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW). This provided an excellent opportunity for Camosun faculty to collaborate in peer based workshops beyond Camosun College, supporting the College's internationalization goal. While the ISW was an enriching learning opportunity for the participants, it was also an inspiring peer-based learning experience for the facilitators.

**Universidad Politécnica de Tlaxcala and Tlaxcala**

The Polytechnic University of Tlaxcala, a public university, was established in 2004 and serves the city of Tlaxcala and the surrounding rural area. Many of the 2200 students come from rural families and are the first in their generation to receive a post-secondary education. The university is predominantly an engineering school, offering financial, industrial, mechatronic, chemical, biotechnological, and Information Technology engineering programs.

**Background (excerpt from Information for ISW Participants, Learning and Teaching Centre):**

The Instructional Skills Workshop is designed to assist teachers in enhancing their teaching and learning practice and become more reflective practitioners. ISW participants are given the opportunity to review basic principles of effective teaching, learn about current practices, and try new strategies and techniques within a safe and supportive environment.

Upon successful completion of the Instructional Skills Workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Work closely with colleagues to mutually explore and enhance teaching / learning practice
2. Actively engage adult students in ways that effectively enhance their learning
3. Use assessment as an integral part of the learning process
4. Understand and utilize the opportunities presented by diversity within the contemporary learning environment

The heart of the ISW is its experiential, peer-based approach. Participants prepare and present a series of three, 10 minute mini-lessons to each other in a mutually supportive small group (maximum of 5 participants, with a facilitator). Feedback on the mini-lessons is provided verbally, in writing, and by means of video recording. Participants quickly see the benefits derived from supportive peer feedback and from the opportunity to view instruction from the learner's perspective. The teacher is always, first and foremost, viewed as a facilitator of learning.

Everyone participates. The workshop is structured as collaboration between facilitators and participants and is grounded in active, experiential learning and based on principles of learning-centered practice.

## **ISW Discussion and Negotiations**

Nancy Sly received a request at the end of August, 2011 from UPT to offer an ISW in Tlaxcala, Mexico to the engineering faculty of that university. This request came from Maria Elena Froese, a Camosun term faculty member and ISW facilitator, and her sister, Aída Hernández Hernández, an engineering faculty member at UPT. Aida participated in the ISW at Camosun and was so inspired by the workshops that she wanted to offer them at her institution. After some discussion between Nancy Sly and the University, dates and three Camosun ISW facilitators were confirmed: Linda Edmond (BEST), Elizabeth West (ELD), and Mavis Smith (ELD). The UPT provided accommodation and some meals. The CCFA PD Committee approved in-house funding for per diem expenses and travel. Of particular note is that all these arrangements were made within a very short period of time: within 10 weeks.

Because this was an international ISW, Nancy Sly and the facilitators had a number of meetings to organize the workshops and address related issues. The preplanning in October and November took considerable time for weekly meetings, email communication among Nancy Sly, the facilitators, Camosun International (CI), and UPT (See attached meeting notes, pages 9-12). Mavis Smith, the main contact person, started in early October communicating several times with Aída Hernández Hernández, Engineering professor at UPT, to make sure that all the necessary planning was done so that the workshops could run smoothly. The Spanish version of the ISW handbook was sent electronically for distribution to the participants. All supplementary handouts were prepared at Camosun College by the facilitators and the Learning and Teaching Centre. Maria-Elena Froese, Camosun faculty from Tlaxcala, provided cultural and practical advice based on her knowledge of Tlaxcala. Jim Paulson, from CCI, provided insights based on his international experience with ISW in Mozambique and Jordan.

The facilitators made their own travel arrangements in consultation with CI. No special visa requirements are necessary for Mexico, but CI prepared a letter of introduction for immigration purposes (see attached, page 13). Small Camosun logo gifts were provided by the School of Access with the assistance of Franklyn Roy.

## **Workshops**

Two facilitators arrived two days before so that they could have one full day to set up the facility for the workshops and ensure that all materials and equipment were in place. Fortunately, Aída was freed from teaching duties for the term and was able to be our on-the-ground coordinator, chauffeur, trouble-shooter, local guide and cultural consultant. This helped immensely with the initial set-up and throughout the workshops.

The workshops were held in a UPT facility from November 24 – 27 over four days, using the standard ISW format (See the attached agenda, pages 14-15). A typical day included facilitator led presentations and workshops followed by the mini-lessons given by the participants. Facilitators generally worked from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., starting one hour before the participants arrived and finishing one to two hours after the participants finished for the day. In addition, some evening preparation work was required.

## Participants and Participant Feedback

The 15 UPT faculty, a balance of male and female, were selected by their deans to participate in the workshops. All relatively new engineering and sciences faculty, some had had careers in industry before joining the university. Because the level of English ranged from most with low proficiency to only a few with a high level of fluency, the university provided two interpreters. The summary of the Summative Evaluation attests to the value of the workshop for the participants (see attached, pages 16-18).

Participants:

Victor Hugo Cabrera Peláez  
Patricia Carina Rojas Hernández  
Rosalía Nallelí Pérez Estrada  
Dafnis Aguila Farrera  
Jorge Eduardo Xalteno Altamirano  
Martha Iñiguez  
Oscar Edgardo Romero Arredondo

Juan Gabriel Porras Cruz  
María Antonia Ruíz Díaz  
Misael González Macías  
Rosario Serrano Serrano  
Irce Leal Cabrera  
Nancy Tepepa Moreno  
Rodrigo Perez



## **Successes**

The following list highlights the success of the workshops.

- Enthusiastic and engaged participants, hungry for improved teaching techniques
- Intellectual group with a solid philosophical foundation of good teaching practice
- Excellent participation in the interactive facilitator-led presentations
- Excellent peer support in the mini lessons
- Great risk taken by some participants to present in English despite limited English skills, which helped some work toward the university goal of offering some classes in English
- Opportunity for participants to interact with colleagues they did not know before in their own institutions
- An excellent venue for the ISW with larger meeting rooms and small break-out rooms
- Detailed pre-planning by Camosun and UPT resulted in smoothly-running workshops free of logistical issues

All at UPT went to great lengths to ensure that the ISW occurred, including the following people:

- Narciso Xicohtencatl Rojas, the Rector (President) of the university
- Aída Hernández Hernández
- Horacio Lima Gutierrez, Director, Industrial Engineering
- José Luis Parra Gutiérrez, Vice President, Academic

## **Challenges**

While the workshops ran smoothly, the language created an added complexity. Translation was needed not only in the facilitator presentations, but also in the mini-lessons and the one-on-one facilitator-participant feedback sessions. This meant that more time overall was needed.

Some participants had other commitments and missed some sessions. Missing the experience, the information, and the discussions hindered their ability to put into practice new teaching methods in the mini-lessons. The intensive format of the ISW requires full commitment and attendance in order to learn and internalize the content of the facilitator-led presentations and to practice new concepts in the mini-lessons.

## **Observations**

UPT faculty identified similar issues that Camosun has such as student participation in class, grading, teacher training, marking, protocol, students at risk, and classroom management. Because faculty at UPT, as at most post-secondary institutions, are hired for their content expertise, teaching and teacher training tend to be new to them. For example, creating clear learning objectives was new to many of the participants.

When delivering an ISW in another culture, expectations about time, attendance, meal breaks, and weekend work do not always follow the Canadian experience. For example, lunch in Mexico typically is

from 2:00 to 4:00 rather than from 12:00 – 1:00. Work continues from 4:00 to 6:00. Also, some participants did not prefer Sunday as this is usually a family day. When delivering an ISW in this situation there is a need to take this into consideration and maintain flexibility.

### **Recommendations**

1. The additional time required by the language challenges means longer days than the usual may be needed.
2. Translators may be needed for offshore delivery and the roles and boundaries of the translators need to be very clear from the outset.
3. Facilitators need 2 – 3 hours of prep and debrief time per day, so this needs to be factored into the schedule. We recommend arriving at least one day before for set up and departing one to two days after to allow for preparing, reflecting, and reporting.
4. All information prior to the ISW workshop should stipulate the necessity of full attendance and participation in order to get the most out of the Workshop. This information was provided in the Information to Participants but could have been emphasised more.
5. To facilitate full attendance, it might be worth holding the ISW during a term break so that participants are free from teaching and other work-related duties.

### **Future Opportunities**

The university is now eager to have more ISW workshops, ISW Facilitator training, and faculty and student exchanges with Camosun College. Certainly, from our perspective this would be an excellent collaboration with UPT and would build on the positive experience of the first such venture with them.