Welcome to Topic one C, in which I will explore the quality teaching model as a curriculum planning framework. The New South Wales quality teaching model didn't arise out of a vacuum, but was built on earlier research both in Queensland through the productive pedagogies model and prior to that the American Authentic pedagogy model. The American Authentic pedagogy model originally arose out of a school reform movement in Chicago, where researchers examined classrooms in which kids were performing exceptionally well and had made progress compared to other schools within the district. Fred Newmann, the principal researcher behind the Authentic Pedagogy model, and his colleagues, found three things that were different in schools where students were doing exceptionally well compared to those where they weren't.

The first key difference Newmann and colleagues noticed was what he called construction of knowledge, in schools where students were doing very well they were engaged in the same kind of constructive processes that people in the real world would be involved in, whether that be in terms of performances for audiences written or oral discourse, construction and repair of objects or other real-world tasks. This was opposed to the school environment where students are often only engaging with the objects or discourse or performances that others have produced and codified. So, while exploration and critical appraisal of the work of others is important. What Newman found was that in the schools where kids were doing really well, they were engaged in the same kind of construction that a professional would be doing in the real world, albeit at a level that was appropriate for their classroom environment.

The second thing that Newmann colleagues found was what he called disciplined inquiry. The Newmann discipline inquiry consisted of three main features using a prior knowledge base from one or more fields, striving for in-depth understanding rather than superficial awareness and expressing conclusions through elaborate communication.

Newmann's third principle or third distinction was what he called value beyond the school. What this means in practice is that the tasks that students were being asked to engage in the classroom were things that people would actually do in the real world rather than being abstract or reified tasks that only occur because they are in a curriculum document in a school.

For Newman, what this demonstrated was precisely the constructivist view of learning. That students were doing well, where they were actively engaged in the kind of processes that people do in the real world to solve real world problems using disciplined inquiry as a knowledge base that had evolved out of decades of scientific work.

Thus, authentic pedagogy could be described as engaging students in disciplined inquiry into meaningful problems to produce work with value beyond the classroom. Newman and colleagues work has had significant influence internationally where ideas have been taken up in Singapore, the Netherlands, in the United Kingdom and of course in Australia, where it influenced both the Queensland productive pedagogies model and the New South Wales quality teaching model.

If you've encountered the quality teaching model before, you'll notice that it's made up of three dimensions, each of which has six elements. One of the striking things that has occurred as the model was distributed into schools was the reaction of some teachers, which were along the lines of; ‘Oh, there are too many elements here, so we're just going to focus on higher order thinking or some other element for this year.’ Sometimes they'd say things like, ‘We're already doing this stuff’ or ‘This stuff's no different to X.’ When teachers take that view of the quality teaching model, it ceases to have the powerful effects that can be found in the literature on authentic pedagogy, quality teaching, and productive pedagogy. And that's because you can't dismember the model and still be doing the model. While it's true that the various elements of the model might be being performed by teachers, there is something about the coherence of the model itself, which is powerful, and which is what I'm going to go to in this lecture.

The first thing about the quality teaching model. That you need to realise is that the three dimensions are critical. The three dimensions need to be present all the time if you want effective teaching and learning. So, the three dimensions:  
Intellectual Quality: students are being challenged to learn something of value.

Quality Learning Environment: students are being socially and pedagogically supported in that learning.

Significance: students are being engaged in the learning itself, and that the learning has a value beyond the classroom environment, are all essential to making quality teaching the effective pedagogy that the research shows that it can be.

The six elements that make up each of the dimensions, in that way, are really pathways to achieving the dimension. They're like an indicator, if you like, of the presence of the dimension. And I'll say a little bit more about those elements as the lecture progresses. But right now, I want to make a point about the way in which we normally think about the three dimensions of the model.

The typical representation of the quality teaching model starts with intellectual quality, then describes the quality learning environment and finally looks at significance. In this lecture, I'd like to suggest a different order of approach. Practically speaking, I believe it's better for us to understand the model in this order. To start with intellectual quality, but then to think about significance of what it is that we're asking the students to do and then move to the quality learning environment. And I've got to explain why I think we should think about it in this particular sequence.

This brings me to what I call the two balances. The first balance is a balance between the intellectual challenge or intellectual quality of the task and its significance for the students or the level of engagement. So, if I have an intellectually rich task, an intellectually challenging task that I want the students to do, it's only going to work if I can make that task have some kind of significance to the students so that they want to engage. If I get the balance between the intellectual challenge of the task and its significance for the students, then I get buy in. The students will actually engage in the task.

So what happens if I get the balance wrong? Imagine if you're an English teacher who is going to teach about one of Shakespeare's plays. You've explored this play and realised it's awesome, but for whatever reason you haven't found a way to make the task of significance for the students. So, you have this great idea about Shakespeare's play that you want to engage the students in. But your way of presenting it has meant that for the students it seems highly irrelevant to be learning about the play and the language, etc., of someone who was born so long ago. If that happens, you've got an intellectually challenging task, but you haven't provided enough significance to the students. You get disengagement. The students simply won't do the task. They won't do what you're hoping them to do, and they won't really get engaged with the ideas that you're hoping that they take away from your lesson.

On the other hand, if you generate a task which has a lot of significance for the students, let's say it's in this case watching a movie on Shakespeare, but you don't do anything with it that actually stimulates them to go deeper or to think more intellectually about what it is they're learning about. Then the students will remain unchallenged. They'll engage in a task, but they won't really have extended their understanding or their knowledge in anything but a superficial way.

So, your first step in implementing quality teaching as a curriculum planning framework is to generate a task that is high in intellectual quality but is also highly significant for the students. And by doing that, you'll get engagement at the right level in the kind of intellectual work that is needed in the classroom. But what if that's all you do? This brings us to the second balance.

The second balance that's necessary is between intellectual quality and the quality learning environment or, as I mentioned before, between challenge and support. If you get the balance between intellectual quality and the quality of leading environment correct, then everyone has a chance of being successful at the task. Of course, some students are going to need more support than others. And so, when we're thinking about the quality learning environment, we may have degrees of support that are different for different students in the classroom. The idea is to scaffold all of our learners to success, but not to over scaffold, because what happens if we get the balance between intellectual quality and the quality of quality learning environment incorrect?

If the balance between intellectual quality and the quality learning environment is tipped towards the intellectual challenge of the task towards intellectual quality. So now we have a task which is, you know, fairly difficult for some students. Some students are going to fail if we haven't provided adequate support for them. So, where the balance is tipped towards intellectual challenge but light on quality learning environment, those students who already have the cultural capital or the intellectual capital to do well at the task will still do well. But those students who have come in without that intellectual capital will actually fail at the task. And so some students, when that balance is correct, are going to fail.

On the other hand, the balance can tip in the other direction. This is a direction where, no matter how clever or well-designed our intellectual task is, how challenging it is for the students. If we provide too much support, that then trivialises the task, in effect, by making it almost impossible to fail. Then students will become successful at trivial tasks. This will be a kind of busywork. This also happens where the task itself doesn't have any intellectual quality. So, lots of support is provided, but the tasks that is being asked doesn't really have an intellectual quality in the first place. And as a result, again, the students will be just engaging in the kind of busywork. This could happen say where a close passage is provided and that the answers to the closed passage are so obvious that no intellectual work is required in order to give the answers to those passages or to the missing words.

So, this leads to why quality teaching is a three dimensional model. And if you look at the Equality Teaching logo, you'll notice that the dimension of intellectual quality is a kind of square like shape that sits on top of two triangles, one for quality learning environment, the other for significance. This particular logo really is demonstrating the idea that intellectual quality itself is the goal and significance and quality learning environment are both used to support us to get there. So, in a sense, intellectual quality weights itself against both the quality learning environment in significance in order to create balance between those dimensions. This means to achieve the positive effects of quality teaching two balances must be achieved. The first balance between intellectual quality and significance gets buy in from the students. And the second balance between intellectual quality and the quality learning environment offers opportunities to everyone to be successful. So, both balances or all three dimensions need to be present in order to have the positive effects of the quality teaching model.

Another way to remember the importance of this balance is to think about good pedagogy as a game of chess. In this mnemonic, the CH of Chess stands for Challenge, the ‘E’ for engagement. The first S for support and the last S for success. Here, Challenge stands in for the dimension of intellectual quality. Engagement stands in for the dimension of significance and support, stands in for the dimension of the quality learning environment together. When we have challenge, engagement, and support, we have the potential of success for all of our students. So while not all elements need to be present in every single lesson, the three dimensions do need to be there. The three dimensions provide the pedagogical basis for engaging learners successfully in some kind of high quality, challenging work and provide the support they need in order for them to be successful.

In part two of this podcast, I'm going to look at the elements and ways you can think about those that may help you understand how they function to support students learning.