

Beyond Generic Planning

Building Secondary Teacher Knowledge for Inclusive Practice

Dr Michaela Vergano | University of Canberra

AASE 2026 National Conference | Darwin

Reimagining Pedagogical Practice





UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

We acknowledge the Larrakia people, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this conference is held, here in Darwin.

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here with us today. As educators, we also acknowledge Country as Teacher: the skyways, waterways and land ways as a source of knowledge, culture and learning, one that has taught and continues to teach, long before and alongside our own classrooms.

Before We Begin...



Did the last PP you read tell you exactly what to do in your subject?



What does this adjustment actually mean for your classroom?



Who helped you figure it out?

Where I'm Coming From



PARENT

A parent of
children with PPs



EDUCATOR

An Inclusive
Education
Coordinator, ITE
educator and
classroom teacher



RESEARCHER

Sharing what I
knew with
colleagues was
harder than it have
should been

TODAY

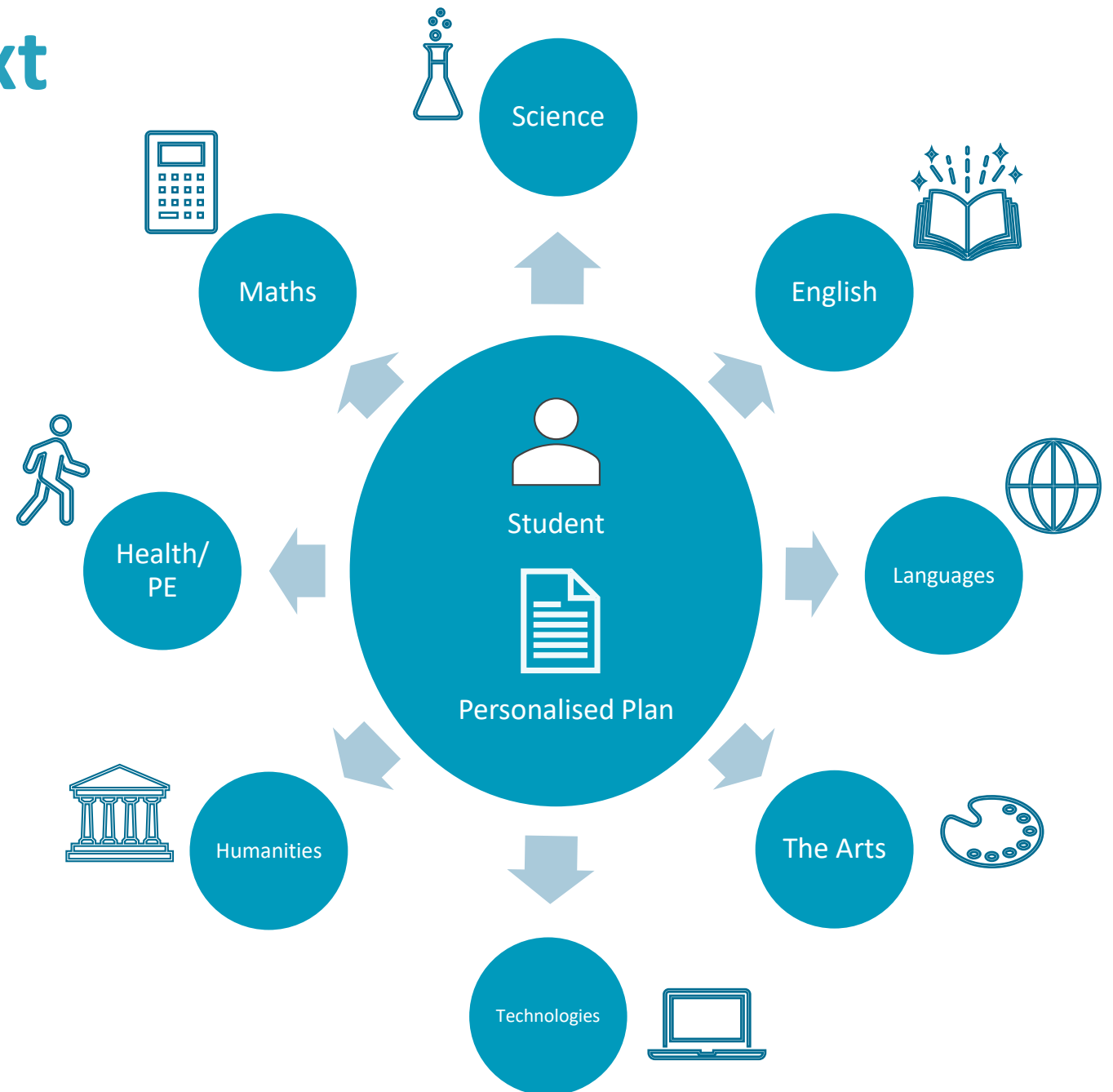
- What teachers need to know.
- How teachers currently figure it out, mostly alone.
- What it looks like to build that knowledge deliberately, together.

The Secondary Context

A single student with a PP may have up to eight subject teachers.

Each one implementing a plan they had no part in writing.

PPs are meant to be mediating tools, connecting student need to classroom practice.



The Research Context

What knowledge do secondary teachers need to use a PP as a genuine mediating tool, and how can they build that knowledge?

The PP as a mediating artefact

Understanding what teachers need to know



One urban ACT secondary school

Three Research Questions

1

1. What integrated pedagogical, content, and student knowledge do teachers need to use a PP as a mediating tool?

2

2. What information needs to be included in a PP for teachers to use it effectively?

3

3. How do secondary teachers use the PP to mediate planning decisions?

Theoretical Lens & Method

Theoretical Lens



Shulman (1986, 1987): Pedagogical Content Knowledge.



Vygotsky (1978): Sociocultural Theory, the PP as a mediating artefact.



Qualitative Case Study: One secondary school

Method



Document analysis

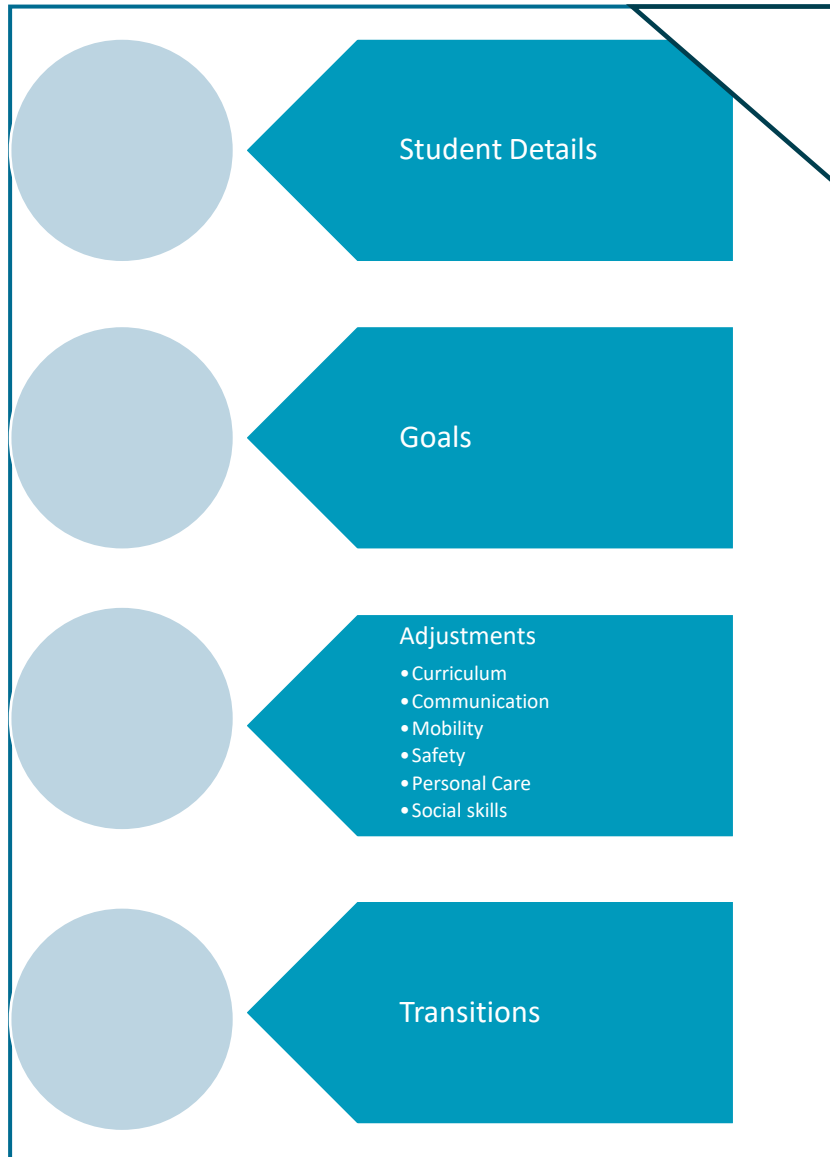


Questionnaires (n=39),



Interviews (n=17).

About the Document



A Catholic Education jurisdiction template, around nine sections.



Based on the DDA, the Disability Standards for Education, and NCCD.



Your jurisdiction's template will look different.

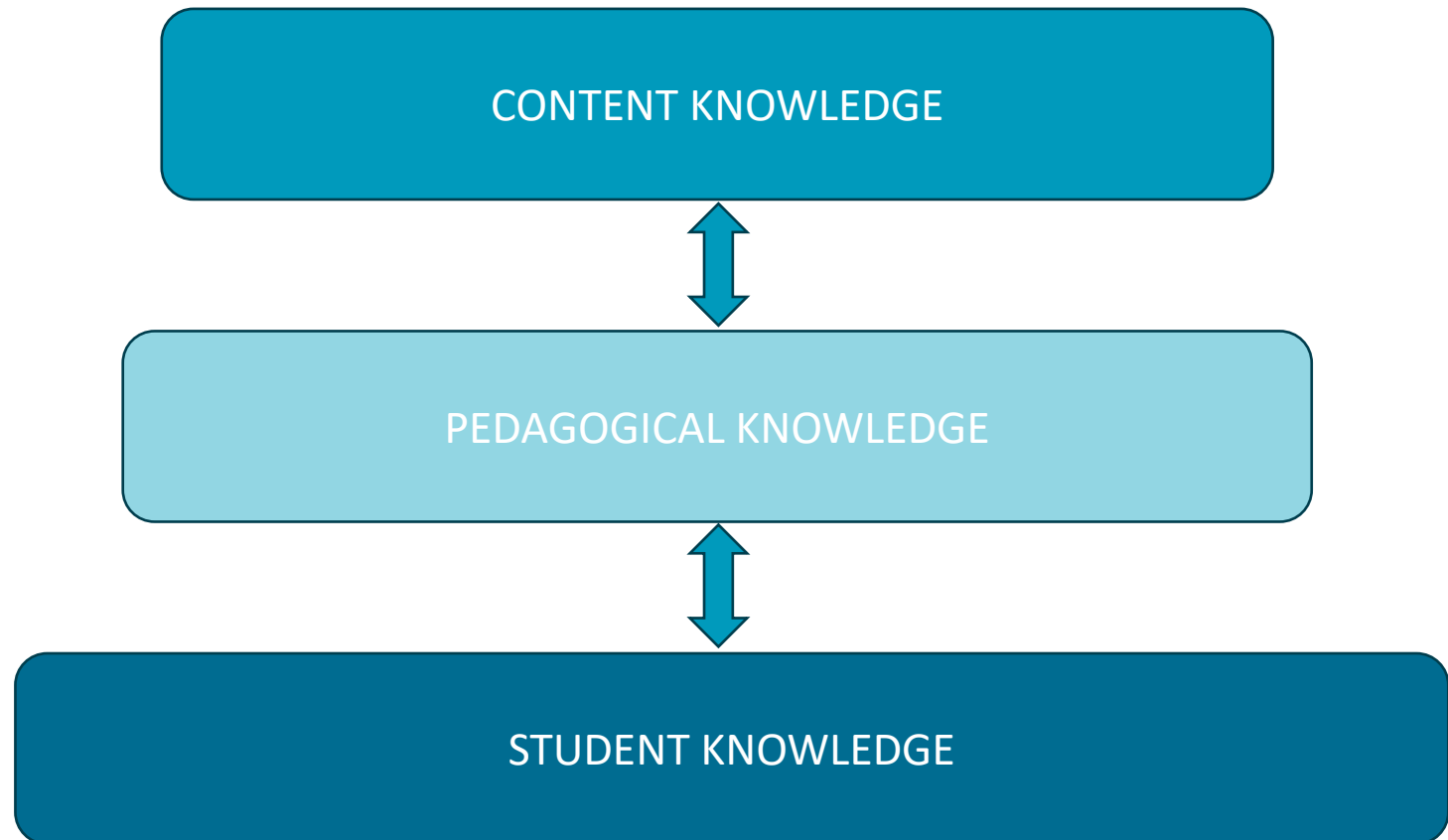


What generalises is not necessarily the document. It's the underlying PCK demand.

An Adapted PCK Framework

This study adapts
Shulman's PCK model.

**Student knowledge is
foundational:
it grounds content and
pedagogical
knowledge.**



Effective PP use starts with knowing the student.

Three Domains



Student Knowledge

Who is this student?

- Strengths
- Learning identity
- Support needs
- Context



Content Knowledge

What does this require in my discipline?

- Science
- Maths
- English
- PE
- Drama



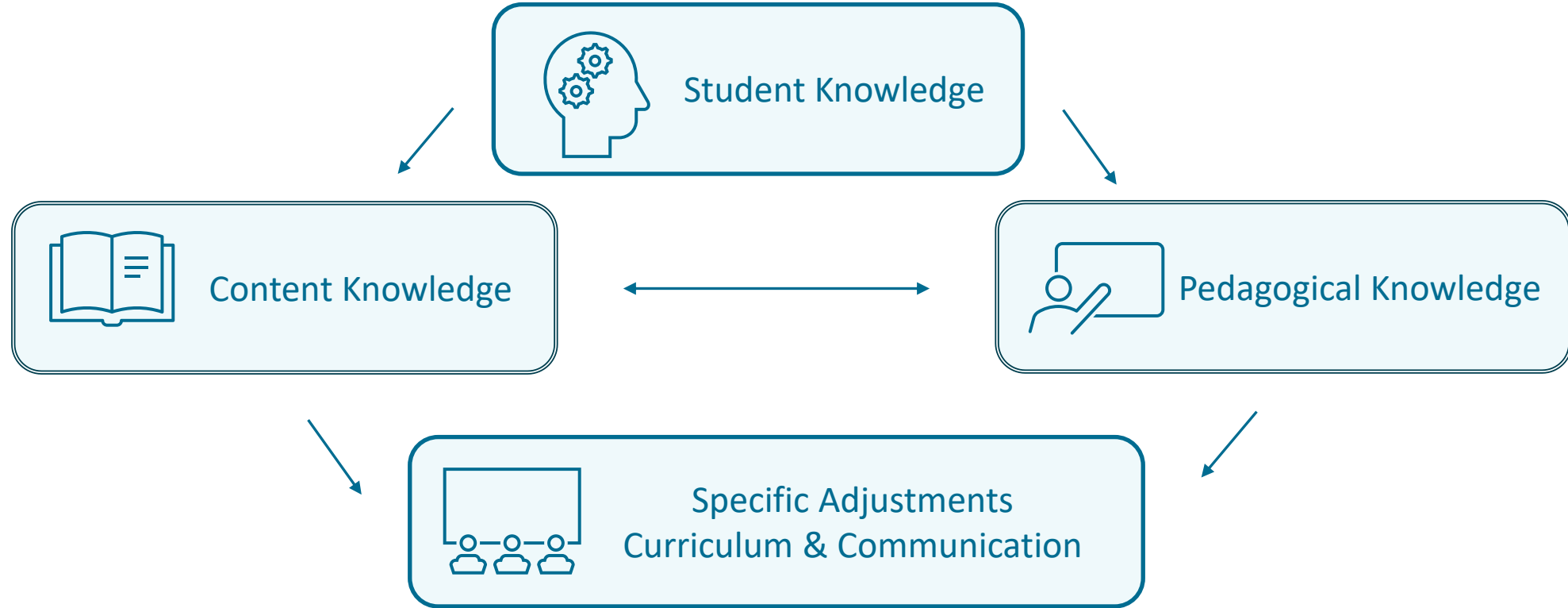
Pedagogical Knowledge

How do I translate this into practice?

- Strategies
- Scaffolds
- Assessments
- Teaching approaches

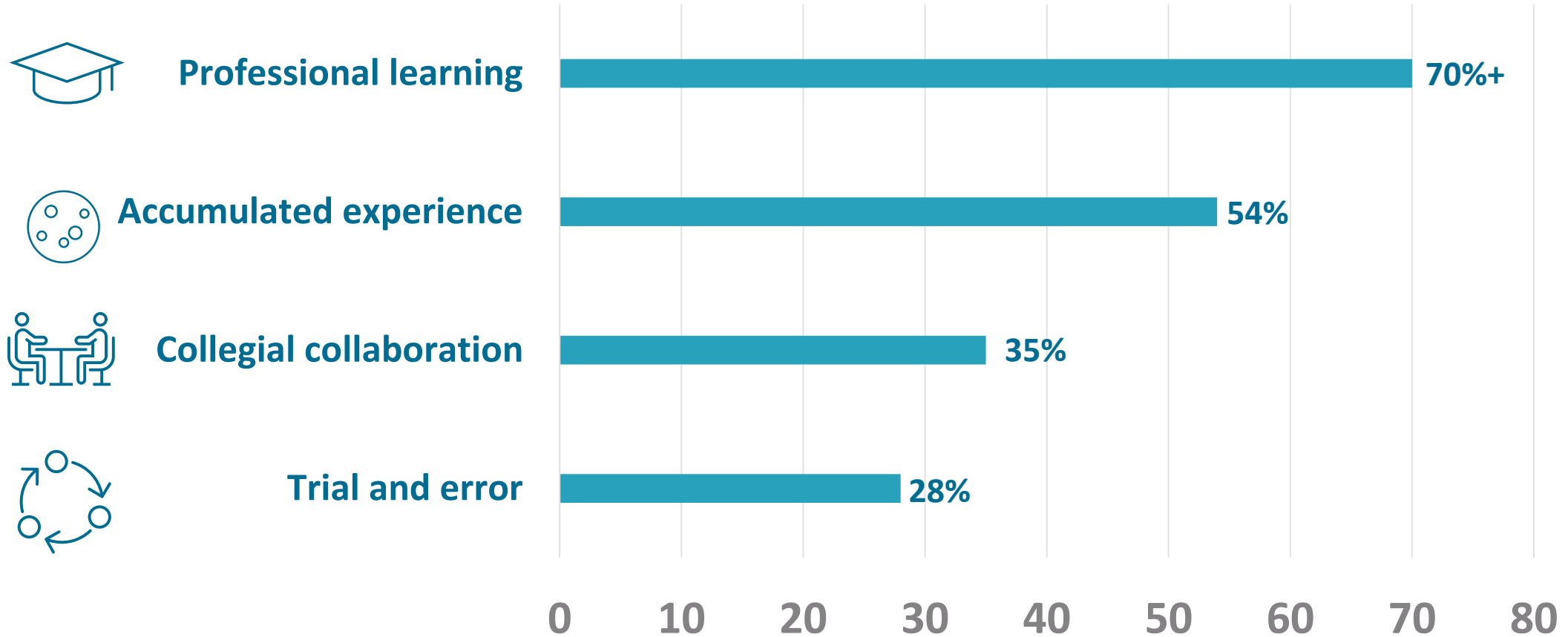
Integration Is the Point, But So Is Direction

Three domains interact. Student knowledge grounds and directs.



Naming the framework is where clarity begins.

How Teachers Actually Learn This



Professional learning provides a foundation and builds general awareness of PPS. The practical knowledge required to interpret and implement PPs in secondary classrooms is built largely through experience and collegial knowledge-sharing, but this learning is rarely systematic.

Same Adjustment, Different Subject?

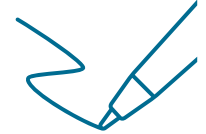


Practical Subjects (e.g., Science, PE, Tech)

- Focus on safety, physical environment, equipment and movement.
- Managing physical risks and accessibility.
- Adapting practical tasks and supervision.

Theoretical Subjects (e.g., English, HASS, Maths)

- Focus on literacy, language concepts and cognitive demands.
- Scaffolding understanding and expression.
- Supporting processing, organization and assessment.



Teachers build their own tracking systems, spreadsheets, checklists. Not a workaround – it's PCK in action, done alone.

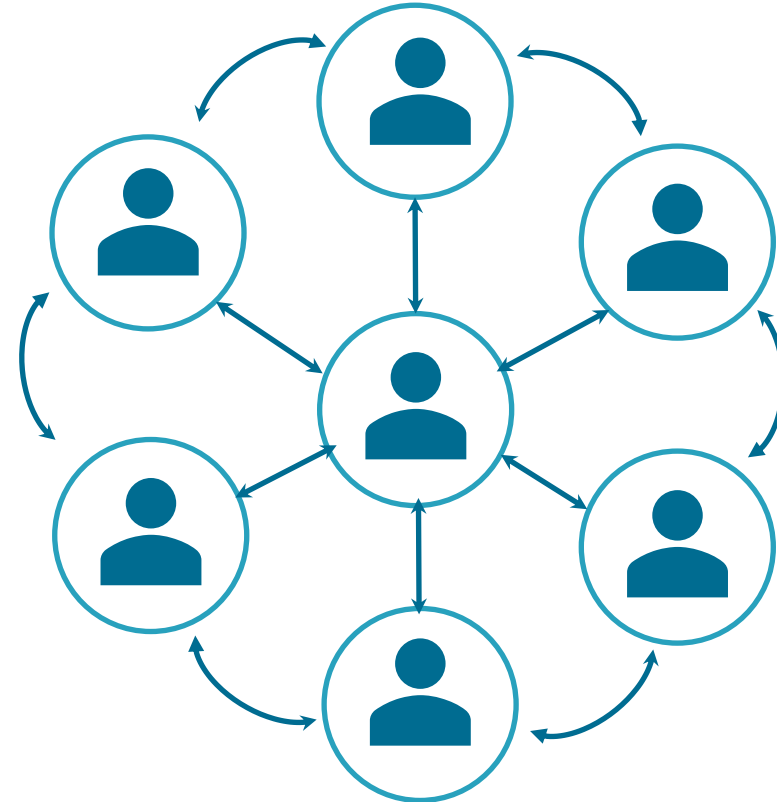
A Knowledge-Sharing Deficit

CURRENT REALITY
Expertise sits in silos



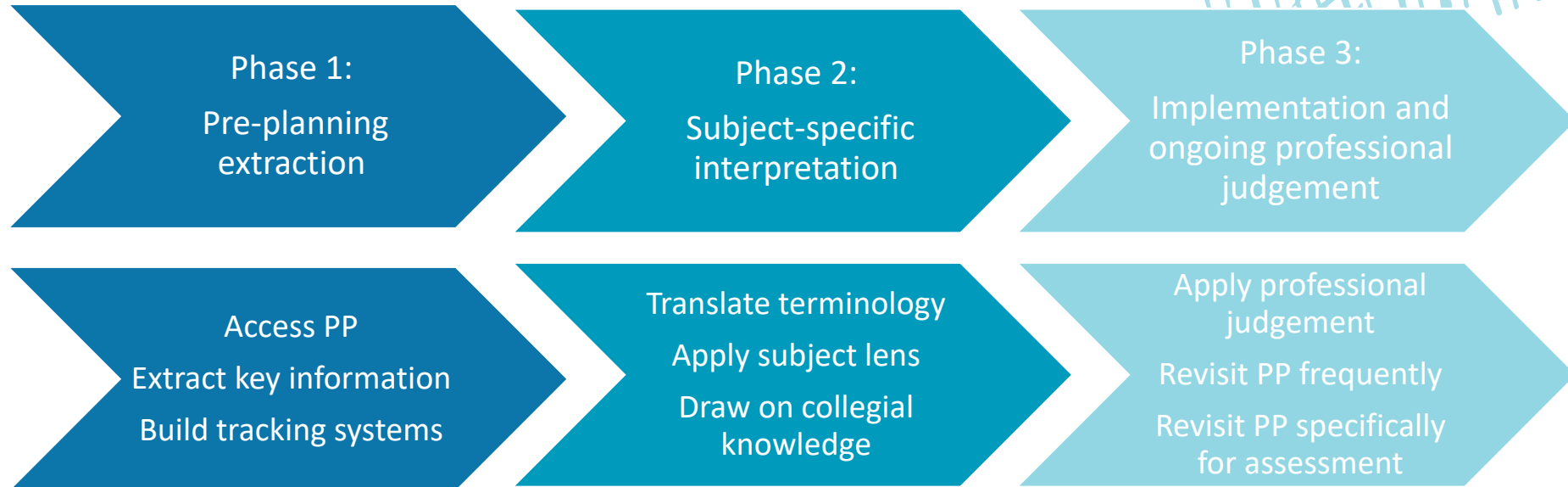
VS.

POSSIBLE REALITY
Expertise is connected and amplified



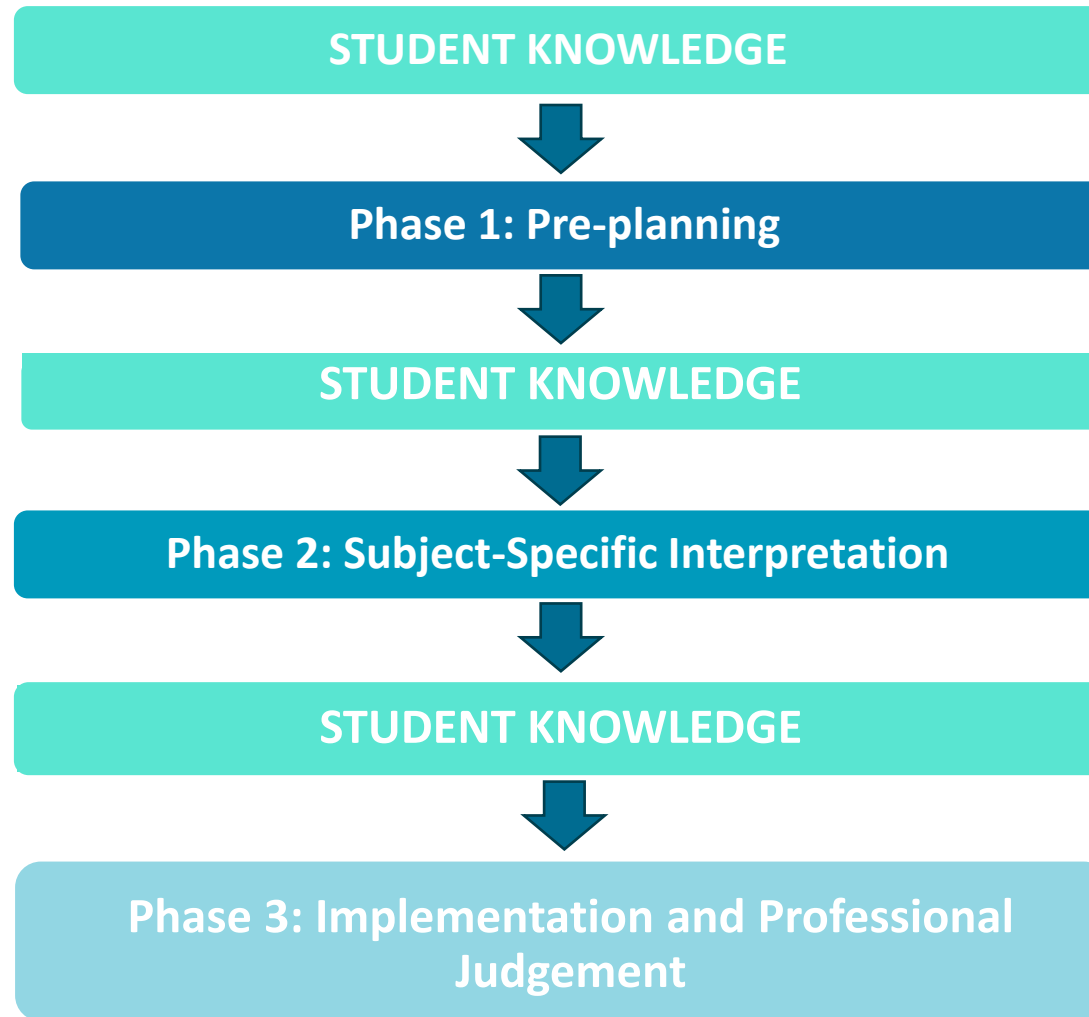
This is not a knowledge deficit. This is a knowledge-sharing deficit.

Three-Phase Adaptation Model



Collegial knowledge-sharing strengthens subject-specific interpretation; effective implementation supports responsive professional judgement.

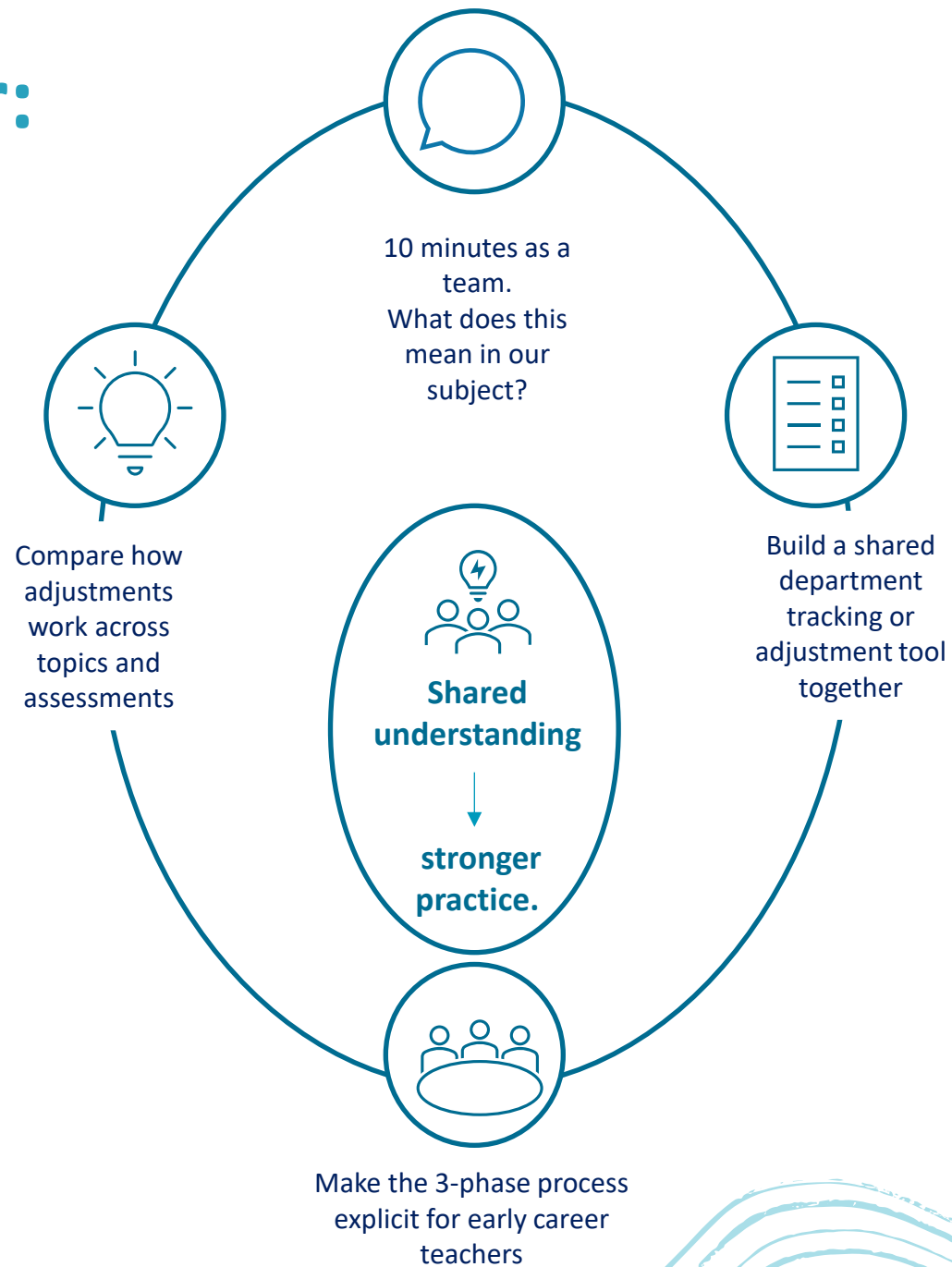
Student Knowledge Runs Through Every Phase



Student knowledge grounds interpretation, implementation and professional judgement.

Building It Together: Subject Team Level

Small, consistent
actions create shared
expertise



You Don't Need a New System



The knowledge already exists in most staffrooms.



What we need are the conditions to share it.



Start with a conversation with the teacher next door.

“

Professional knowledge develops through **structured interaction**, not isolation.

- Vygotsky (1978)

Beyond Boundaries



Isolated Interpretation



Shared Collegial Knowledge



Generic Understanding



Subject-Specific Clarity



Experience-Dependent Practice



Deliberately Built Expertise



**Stronger teachers. More inclusive classrooms.
Better outcomes for every student.**



“

The most powerful professional learning about PPs may not come from a workshop or a policy document.

It may come from the colleague sitting next to you at lunch.

”



References

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4–14.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X015002>

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1–23.

<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.57.1.j463w79r56455411>

Vergano, M. J. (2026). *What Teachers Need to Know: A Study of Secondary Teachers' Use of Personalised Plans in Inclusive Classrooms*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Canberra]. <https://doi.org/10.26191/2k4w-9k56>

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Questions?

Dr Michaela Vergano
University of Canberra
Michaela.Vergano@canberra.edu.au



Let's
continue the
conversation