ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

eCPD Programme - Enhancing Learning

This collection of papers (edited by Kevin Donovan) has been produced by the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) for LSIS. They are based on the summaries used by presenters during workshops at the 2009 launch of the eCPD Programme.

Other material from the conference can be accessed from http://www.alt.ac.uk/conferences.php

Contents

Introduction

This collection of papers is based on the presentations at the national launch conference for the eCPD Programme held in London on 5 February 2009.

The conference was organised by the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and BDP Learning, on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). The event took place with the support of a consortium of further education partners, and it built upon ALT and the former QIA's outstandingly successful "e-learning practitioner" conferences held in 2005 and 2007.

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) has commissioned BDP Learning, ALT and partners to design and manage the eCPD Enhancing Learning Programme. This has been developed with the sector and aims to support practitioners and senior managers to make effective use of technology to improve teaching and learning and organisational performance.

There was a choice of 20 workshops spread across morning and afternoon, each of which was designed to illustrate some aspect of continuing professional development (CPD) for e-learning. As on previous occasions the workshops provided a lively and active heart to a conference which buzzed with the enthusiasm of hundreds of practitioners and staff from sector agencies.

Colleagues were welcomed to the event by Markos Tiris, LSIS Programme Director and to the launch of the eCPD Programme, and there were keynote speeches from Roger McClure, then Chief Executive of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), and from Toni Fazaeli, Chief Executive of the Institute for Learning (IfL).

ALT staff provided their usual cheerful and ultra-efficient service to guide participants through the complications of the hotel and the conference sessions.

Details of the eCPD Programme can be found at http://ecpd.bdplearning.com/ecpd/index.php

A national prospectus for technology-focused CPD

Bob Harrison (Education Adviser and Consultant to Becta),
Sue Butler (Education Adviser and Consultant),
Filip Rokita (BDP Media Website Consultant) and
Steve Smith

1. The organisation

Becta is the government agency leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning. It is Becta's ambition to utilise the benefits of technology to create a more exciting, rewarding and successful experience for learners of all ages and abilities, enabling them to achieve their potential.

2. Overview

The workshop had two main themes: to present a 'pilot' version of a website for technology-focused CPD and to invite constructive feedback from delegates which might shape the next stage of its development.

One of Becta's strategic objectives is to develop a national (online) portfolio of CPD and training opportunities to support the effective use of technology in learning and teaching. Its purpose will be to help develop a capable and confident education and training workforce that is skilled in the effective deployment and exploitation of technology.

The related development project has also been strongly influenced by the Harnessing Technology strategy (DFES 2005).

3. Details

Approach

The project group includes educational consultants and advisers with experience across the post-16 sector. The home page of the website has been designed to appeal to a wide range of potential users from the sector with 'quick search' menus to enable individuals to find relevant information and resources within three clicks of a mouse.

The website has been produced by partners from BDP Media who are specialists in website design. The educational advisers have informed and shaped the technical design of the site from the outset in an attempt to ensure that it is intuitive to use and relevant.

The lead strategic partner is LSIS, and the team members have consulted with other national e-learning partners on the shape and scope of the project. Version 1.0 of the website was released in March 2009 and a broader and more extensive consultation exercise will follow. The results of this consultation will contribute to version 2.0 which is scheduled to be released at the end of 2009.

Impact

As the project is still at an early stage of development, the current activity is one of consultation and continual refinement. The workshop gave the opportunity to ask delegates the following questions:

- Which providers should be represented in a national prospectus for technology-focused CPD?
- What 'opportunities' would be most helpful?
- Is the search logical? E.g. an internal site search and an external limited (Google) search?
- Are there other ways you expect to search?
- To 'future proof' the national prospectus we are avoiding locking into any policy frameworks or initiatives. Is this OK?

The responses from the delegates were many and varied. The main contributions were as noted below.

4. Lessons, caveats and implications

These were the delegate responses in February 2009 to the home page and site search facilities of the National Prospectus beta version website.

Session 1

Home page
- Have 'where do I start?' further up the page to make it more obvious.
- Include 'open source' software as an additional search option.
- Why not a Google approach? Just have a search box for whatever query. Are menus too prescriptive in the end?
- Instructions not required. Learners use by doing.
- Could there be an option which clearly points to reflective practice in addition to resource location for a particular search?
- Buttons should be labelled more in terms of tasks/processes; they look ICT-focused at the moment.
- Can the site be customisable (to become 'My Prospectus')?
- Should the search engine start from the role of the person browsing so that the results are more relevant?
- It is helpful to have links to current policy and strategy information.

Site search
- Search results should include courses but also tutorials/ resources/ papers/ research and networks, shown in as broad a way as possible as not everyone wants to view course providers.
- Needs to be dynamic.
- Could search results generate 'useful links' and related subjects to offer the browser further opportunities?
- Is there a 'refine search' facility?
- Could users give 'star' ratings to resources and links?

- Provider results could just use a link to the provider site for more information; there is no need to host detailed information on the prospectus site when it is duplicated elsewhere.

- How would the site be maintained and constantly refreshed?

- Who would take off obsolete materials?

- Could there be an easy procedure for reporting bad or less relevant content?

- Need for good quality assurance processes.

- Could the site use Wikipedia-style presentation with links embedded in an introductory narrative?

- A query about whether there are many wikis or blogs available for FE and, if so, can they be found?

- Is the site in danger of becoming 'all things to all people'? Who are the prime customers?

- Needs to use Web 2.0 technology without duplicating what is already available.

- Should the site be customisable from the outset? E.g. pick search engines according to role or preference?

- The site points to resources but should also define what CPD is; it should add value to a user's knowledge.

- Needs a better hook to ensure people come back and that non-e-learning specialists will want to use it.

- Take the site into the sector and do proving trials

Session 2

Home page
- A search engine should first define the user's role or preference so that results are more relevant.

- The homepage is not really intuitive, with lots of text and links.

- The homepage is not very exciting to look at.

- The homepage does not have a memorable 'brand' image or colour scheme.

- The list of options is a hostage to fortune; there will always be one missing from a user's perspective so it is better to use a 'Google' type box.

- Some participants liked the menu structure though they questioned whether the options given were sufficiently comprehensive.

- Subject headings are too traditional; need more references to mobile technologies etc.

- One participant liked the use of types but thought some of the categories were not correct.

Site search
- If courses appear as a search result should the cost also appear for easy comparison?

- Are the 'other results' at the bottom of the page equally endorsed in terms of importance or is there a hierarchy inferred?

- A mixed reception to the idea of rating.

- All results must be current and all links 'live' to avoid user frustration. How to ensure this?

- The USP of this site could be that all results are relevant, good quality, current and come from recognised sources.

- Could users upload new links to enhance search results? What would be the editorial process? A standard approval process?

- Needs interactivity; it may be useful to have a query box or FAQs. It needs something that will bring non-specialist staff back.

- Need the ability to personalise : networks, mentoring, coaching opportunities, models, nuggets of learning embedded in other sites,

- Guidance and feedback on where to go next, progression routes.

- Could an RSS feed be an option to alert users to new content/ changes? Some prefer to have an email-filtered feed.

- Results should offer a broad range of related topics not just course results for the 'online learning' search.

- There is too much information within search results; use links to the original sites.

- A detailed results screen is not required: go from first search result screen direct to the provider website.

- '3 clicks' rule for site design: whatever the role of the user or the nature of the query, they get a search result on the third click.

- To what extent would the site owners endorse the quality of search results? How can they do this?

- What can this site provide that Google cannot?

- Weekly/monthly email alerts to inform users of new content/ changes but filtered by keywords and by types, place etc.

- The site should have a clear 'brand' image (logo, colour or both) and needs to be more memorable.

- The site will prove useful if it includes all the activities known from national organisations which can be viewed as a trusted or 'endorsed' site.

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Website: http://www.slideshare.net/becta_feandskills/towards-a-national-prospectus-for-technology-enhanced-cpd

A whole organisational approach to leading change in order to maximise the impact of the eCPD programme

Peter Munday (Head of Consultancy and Coaching Services, LSIS) and
Ian Pritchard (Strategic Associate, LSIS)

1. The organisation

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) is the sector-owned body that aims to accelerate the drive for excellence in the learning and skills sector, building the sector's own capacity to design, commission and deliver improvement and strategic change.

2. Overview

Research has shown that, to maximise the impact of initiatives such as the eCPD Programme, a whole organisational approach is needed with senior management involvement throughout. Embedding change is not an easy process and this workshop explored issues that impede effective implementation, and strategies to overcome such issues.

LSIS has developed a range of e-learning programmes for managers and leaders in the further education and skills sector. These programmes encourage both personal and organisational development. The workshop also looked at how these programmes might be used to complement the work of professional development advisers (PDAs).

3. Details

Approach

The LSIS e-leadership programmes have been running since 2003. Participating organisations span the sector and include FE and sixth form colleges, specialist colleges, work-based learning, providers working in secure environments, and adult and community learning (ACL) providers. The approach across the programmes covers both organisational development and personal leadership development skills.

Scale

Since 2003 more than 2000 individual participants representing more than 500 providers from across the sector have participated in the e-leadership programmes.

Impact

It is clear from follow-up work that, as a result of the programmes, many organisations have been able to develop new approaches to delivery, raise quality and improve the experience of learners. Crucially, the programmes have enabled staff to engage others in order to support a change in culture, not just to change isolated 'islands' of practice.

To assess the impact of its programmes LSIS uses the e-leadership positioning statement (eLPS) tool with providers and also carries out follow-up evaluation and impact studies. Based on this evidence the organisations that have participated have moved 'up' the transformation model, moving from a localised or coordinated approach to the use of technology in an embedded and, in some cases, transformative approach. Organisations have been able to make strategic investment in technology, achieving business benefits such as cost-effective expansion and raising quality.

Costs and benefits

The LSIS e-leadership programmes are currently free and participants qualify for an LSC capital grant of £2500 per participant, up to a maximum of three claims per organisation per year. It is envisaged (February 2009) that the programmes will continue to run on this basis after April 2009.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

Successful embedding of technology requires senior management support, a vision, strategy and a plan to engage the whole organisation. Technology should be seen as providing solutions to the key issues that organisations face and not as a bolted-on (and therefore non-essential) afterthought. The creativity and innovation within the sector is beyond doubt but effective leadership is needed for transferable and scalable innovation.

A particular challenge for the sector is the rate of 'churn' in staff and in some leadership teams, which means that some organisations fail fully to implement and sustain their strategies, and as a result lose ground that they had previously gained. Organisations need to develop approaches which can ratchet up and secure their technological gains by embedding the strategic use of technology across all their business processes.

Individual enthusiasts do make a difference through their creativity, innovation, enthusiasm and commitment. However, for that difference to be sustainable, widely felt and transformative, colleagues at all levels of the organisation need to be engaged. It can't just be left to one person. Leadership skills are therefore essential at all levels in an organisation if the potential benefits of technology are to be realised.

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Delivering work based learning as a consortium to national employers

Tom Holland (Communications Director, MyKnowledgeMap) and
Dave Waller (Operations Director)

1. The organisation

MyKnowledgeMap (MKM) is one of the UK's leading learning technology providers. It produces a comprehensive range of systems, services and courseware which allow organisations to improve the way they manage learning and development.

Its mission is to help colleges, universities and other organisations to manage learning and course materials in a way that makes them personal to the needs of different learners, and flexible enough to meet the challenges of the future. There is also a range of off-the-shelf systems that can be "plugged in" to each other to create an end-to-end skills management and development platform.

2. Overview

The presentation looked at the delivery of an online foundation degree to Tesco as a national pilot, and at the systems and content that MyKnowledgeMap created for the Foundation Degree Forward agency to support the delivery of the programme. It looked at the challenges implied by the delivery of degrees through consortia, and focused particularly on the technical challenges. It went on to explore the foundation degree's mainstream adoption by further and higher education institutions nationally, and looked at the advantages of technology in providing a high-value service for an employer.

During the development of the degree, a number of issues arose around personalisation and adaptation. The presentation examined how these were solved, and explored some emerging ideas about how the systems and solutions developed for this degree have evolved, including the emerging demands for supporting mobile technology.

3. Details

Approach

In 2008 the UK government agency for work-based degrees Foundation Degree Forward was looking to offer a foundation degree in retail. The degree would be piloted by retail giant Tesco and needed to be suitable for both experienced retail professionals and new entrants to the sector.

Students who enrolled on the degree course would have diverse educational backgrounds and be spread across the country, and the challenge was to find a way for tutors to keep in touch with learners and track each individual student's development.

MyKnowledgeMap (MKM), the Retail Academy and two UK universities (Manchester Metropolitan and The University of the Arts in London) were awarded the contract to design and build e-learning for the brand new degree. MKM was the technical developer for the project and created a combination of e-learning and online support for the unique programme.

One of the problems we faced when it came to delivering the course was that the two universities involved in the project used different virtual learning environments (VLEs), and one of them was in the middle of upgrading their delivery platform. In order to make sure all the learners received the same high standard of delivery, MKM devised an 'online classroom' which hosts the e-learning and supports online student-tutor interaction.

The e-learning provided by MyKnowledgeMap was interactive and customisable. Tesco were able to use the Compendle tool to rebrand the e-learning with their logo and company colours. They could also replace standard images with some more relevant to their employees and could add extra content. The online classroom system allowed Tesco employees to use personal learning spaces and e-learning to hone their skills in cooperation with tutors at University of the Arts London and Manchester Metropolitan University. The e-learning included a learning log so that the learners could make notes and record responses to exercises which could be read by their tutor.

The foundation degree in retail is now offered on a national scale and can be tailored to suit all retailers. It has been taken up by other prestigious clients, including Booths supermarket, who are putting members of their store management team through the degree using Manchester Metropolitan University.

MKM and the Retail Academy worked with experts in the field of retail from the two partner universities offering the degree course, to design and build the e-learning. There are eleven complete units of learning and assessment offered as part of the course, with a twelfth unit consisting of a self-managed project which students undertake in their second year. The units are spread across ten modules which cover all areas of retail management.

There are three themes running through all the units: business improvement, customer and staff loyalty and the application of technology within the retail sector. It was important that the e-learning supported these themes, and that it was interactive enough to engage the learners.

The e-learning content was authored and reviewed by professionals from the universities and then handed over to MKM to design and package. The e-learning topics produced included activities, quizzes and interactive applications such as videos and pop-ups. It was important to make some of the e-learning interactive in order to cater for a wide range of students who learn in different ways.

Scale
Forty students funded by Foundation Degree Forward initially took up the new degree in retail, and the first year has been completed. This group of students have now gone into their second year, and Tesco have bought places for a further sixty members of their staff to join the two-year programme.

A number of other organisations and colleges are now delivering the foundation degree, based on the success of this initial pilot.

Impact
The design and creation of a tailor-made foundation degree in retail was the essential aim. The first year of the pilot degree has been a huge success, with positive feedback from students, their colleagues and the tutors.

The foundation degree has given learners a chance to further their education and development, while still being able to perform a full-time job. The degree has appealed to a wide range of learners, from students straight out of school or college, to seasoned retail professionals.

The features of the online classroom have ensured learners feel supported and are able to ask for help as and when they need it; the common delivery platform allows learners enrolled at both partner universities to access the same features and benefits.

An outside organisation, Reflexxion, was commissioned to evaluate the success of the first twelve months of the pilot and a number of the degree students were selected to provide qualitative data. Students were asked to explain the knowledge they had learnt and how they had put this into practice. Store managers were also interviewed and asked what their observations had been of their students' new behaviours and how they had benefited the store and ultimately the company. The students interviewed were from both universities and were a mix of line managers and A Level option students.

• 85% of students passed term 1 modules at 40% and above

• 74% of students passed term 2 modules at 40% and above

All of the students in the sample group were able to give examples of what they had learnt and how the foundation degree was helping them to develop their careers in retail. 100% of store managers interviewed could describe changes in behaviour of the students that had brought about business benefits from practices learnt.

Every one of the store managers interviewed about students taking the foundation degree could pinpoint specific benefits the programme had brought to their staff and the organisation as a whole.

Tesco have funded a further sixty of their employees to study for the new degree and these students have recently started the two year course. Due to the success of the pilot and the positive publicity it has received, other organisations and higher education institutions are now engaged with the foundation degree. Some of the institutions that have recently adapted the course and delivery methods include Leicester College, Park Lane College in Leeds, AAH Pharmaceuticals and Booths.

Costs and benefits

In order to create a bespoke degree tailored specifically to the needs of work-based learners, we had the following objectives.

• Create a consistent platform which would support the delivery of foundation degrees.

• Design and build interactive and engaging e-learning mapped against key competencies.

• Develop learning which could be accessed by learners at their own convenience, at home or at the workplace.

• Offer tutors a way to set, respond to and discuss activities and assignments.

• Combine e-learning and online support with tutor-led workshops.

• Make sure students taking the degree had a variety of learning resources and felt supported.

We feel that we have met all of these objectives and, although it was necessary to replicate some of the effort already expended on institutions learning infrastructures, we now have a platform that is capable of providing cross-institutional support to a single employer.

"Establishing a robust infrastructure to support remote learners based in the workplace is as important as the quality of the learning materials. The innovative and responsive system developed with MKM will ensure that learners and tutors can communicate more effectively and (self) evaluate progress and performance. As part of this important partnership MKM will continue to support the national roll out of this project" (Charles Pickford, Director for Employer Partnerships at Foundation Degree Forward)

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

Engaging all stakeholders with a complex new set of systems meant that one needs to ensure that they have proper support.

Online support and help desk: It can be difficult to support learners undertaking work-based study, and it is easy for distance learners to feel isolated. It was important that the new degree offered support and a sense of community for the various learners spread across the country. The online classroom hosts forums, allowing learners to engage with their tutors and, perhaps more importantly, with each other. The forums give learners the opportunity to share ideas, ask questions and discuss their learning and development.

Learners can also contact a help desk, based at Manchester Metropolitan University, if they have questions or concerns about any element of the foundation degree.

Induction days and face-to-face workshops: Although the foundation degree is delivered almost entirely online, learners are introduced to the course during an induction day at one of the two partner universities. Shortly afterwards they also attend an intensive workshop with their tutor which serves to establish a relationship between student and tutor which can then be maintained via the online classroom.

Most of the students taking the foundation degree have full-time jobs in retail. Not only are they working long hours, they also have to find time to access their learning and complete assessments.

It was important to break down the learning into manageable topics which wouldn't overwhelm learners who had windows of 30 minutes or an hour to dedicate to their personal development. Each bite-size topic displays a progress bar, letting learners know how far they have worked through a particular topic, and allowing them to keep track of their learning.

Because the degree is delivered mostly online, learners can access the e learning when it suits them - either at home or at their workplace.

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eLab: personalising eCPD

Phil Ackroyd (e-Learning Manager) and
Joanne Shand (Staff Development Trainer)

1. The organisation

City College Norwich (CCN) is a large further and higher education college in the East of England

2. Overview

This handout provides an overview of how the introduction of the eLab has impacted on e-learning staff development within the College, and how the use of the eLab and the e-skills audit have enabled CCN to personalise the offer of eCPD across the institution.

3. Details

Approach

We needed to set up the eLab in a physical space, but also to practise what we preached and ensure that the development allowed staff to access materials in a fully flexible manner. Pedagogically this meant online video, face-to-face sessions and printed material so that we could meet the different learning styles of College staff.

Scale

There are over 600 staff working at the College. The eLab has had:

- 1300 plus attendances at eLab face-to-face events since January 2008. This includes face-to-face delivery at a number of different sites, including the flagship financial academy in the centre of Norwich, and the trade union learning centre.

- 1200 hits on the eLab blog since July 2008.

- 767 viewings of Mediasite presentations since July 2008.

Impact

Each member of staff was invited to complete an e-skills audit which had been developed using the Lewisham College original. This gave staff immediate practical feedback on what to do to improve their skills by keying in to the eLab offer and resources.

We hope to see how the inspection scores of the schools within the College will improve as this approach develops. Already those schools with lower scores have been targeted with additional e-learning training sessions on topics relevant to the school

Costs and benefits

What did the eLab cost to set up? A total of approximately £70,000 including:

- 12 high specification PCs.

- Interactive whiteboard.

- Projector.

- Digital signage.

- E-voting system.
- MediaSite x 2.

What does eLab cost to run? A total of approximately £70,000 a year including:

- One full-time member of staff.
- Additional staff time.
- One classroom.

What other costs need to be considered? Those thinking about such a development should allow a budget of approximately £10,000 per annum for software, hardware, travel - and cakes to tempt in recalcitrant members of staff

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

Giving staff time to attend sessions is still difficult: everyone wants training during the same timetable slot. However, by talking to the heads of schools, we are setting up more relevant sessions for groups of curriculum staff.

A specific space for staff training is very important. Staff need to be able to try (and fail sometimes) outside of the glare of the classroom. The College needs to embed the skills audit results further into the appraisal process. The e-course review is still new, so has not yet been implemented, but should be another lever for change.

5. Contact details

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Embedding learning design at Barnet College

Lorna Burns (ESOL Course Leader)

1. The organisation

Barnet College is one of the largest further education colleges in England and is situated in North West London. It has five main centres offering over 2,000 courses.   ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) is offered on four sites and courses are either full-time (12½ hours a week) or part-time (4½ or 6½ hours a week).

2. Overview

The related presentation reported on a pilot project to embed learning design using LAMS (the Learning Activity Management System) in the ESOL department at Barnet College, following the success of its use during two JISC projects (the eLISA and ELIDA CAMEL projects).

The presentation explained what LAMS is: software that can be used by teachers after training to deliver activity-based student-centred sessions in either a blended or 100% online environment. Although the presentation focused on the teachers' and learners' experiences of using LAMS in the ESOL Department at Barnet College, the software can be used in any teaching context. The factors which led to the project's success were highlighted together with any problems encountered.

3. Details

Approach

The project involved Barnet College, the University of Greenwich and LAMS International.

LAMS has three main modes: an author mode, a learner mode and a monitoring mode (so that student activity can be observed). It is open source software so it is free; but it needs to be supported either in-house or by LAMS International. We used LAMS International to host LAMS on their server for the College as it was felt that they would be better able to help with any technical queries than the in-house technical team.
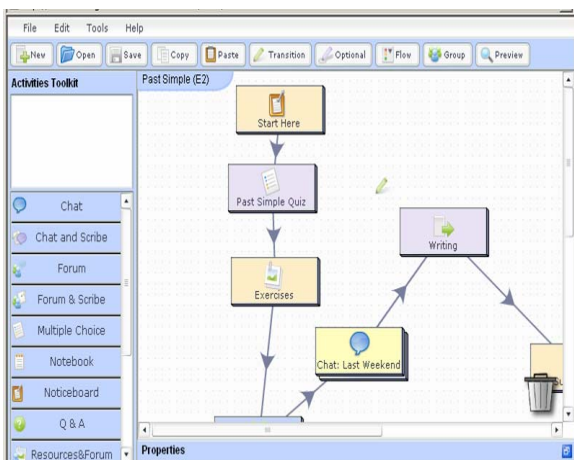
LAMS Author Mode
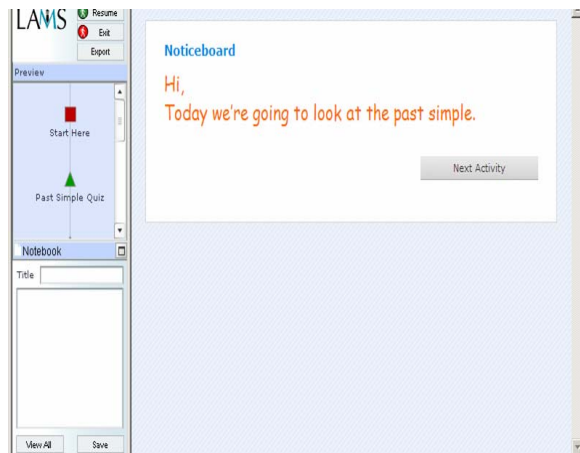
LAMS Learner Mode

It was decided that the teachers involved with the project should understand the concept of design for learning on which LAMS is based before they experienced LAMS as a learner or an author. The University of Greenwich has developed two related learning design workshops: the introduction to learning design and authoring with learning design. They were delivered to the ESOL teachers who were participating in the project at the College by Simon Walker of the University of Greenwich and Lorna Burns of Barnet College. In addition to this, the teachers could attend additional workshops or drop-in sessions.   The teachers gained accreditation for the workshops and could use the training as part of their 30 hours of continuing professional development (CPD).

The teachers agreed to author a sequence in LAMS, deliver it with a group of ESOL learners, evaluate their experience, and ask the learners to do likewise. Before delivering the sequences to their learners, the teachers evaluated each other's LAMS learning designs.

Scale

Ninety three students from ten classes (and including trained teachers) from E1 (beginners) to L1 (upper-intermediate) used LAMS at least once during the summer term of 2008. The students in the pilot came from a huge number of countries and a variety of cultures and educational backgrounds. Their ages ranged from 16 to over 60 and they had a range of computer skills from beginner to advanced.
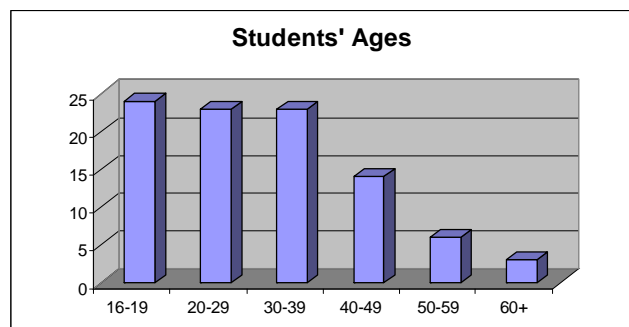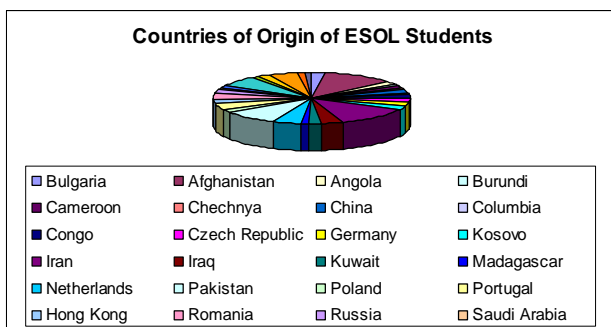
Student Profile of ESOL Learners

Impact

Of the 93 learners who took part in the pilot, 47 enjoyed the LAMS lesson more than lessons without LAMS, and 64 (including all 9 at E1 level) definitely wanted to use it again and 19 would have quite liked to do so.
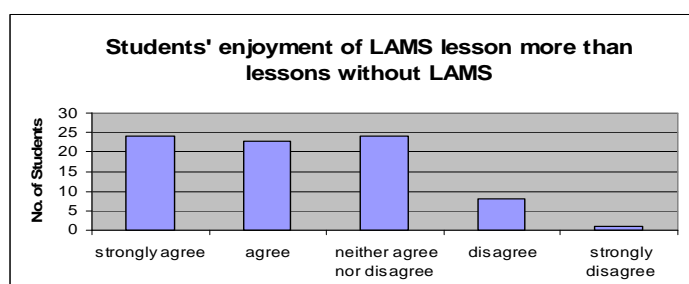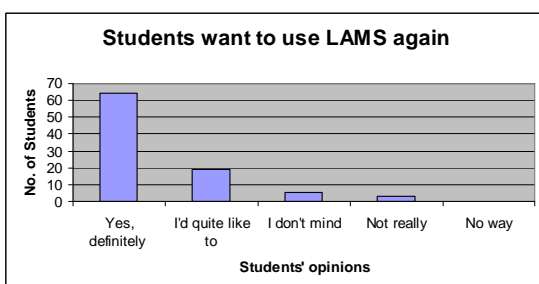
Students' Experience of LAMS

There was a discrepancy between the learners' experience of using LAMS and the experience of the teachers. The main reasons for this were technical. Only three of the eight teachers definitely wanted to use LAMS again, although the remaining five would want to do so. Furthermore, four of the teachers felt that LAMS was very effective or effective for teaching and learning and the remaining four considered that LAMS was quite effective

Teachers' Experience of LAMS

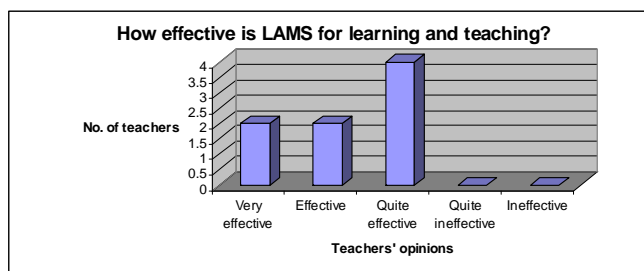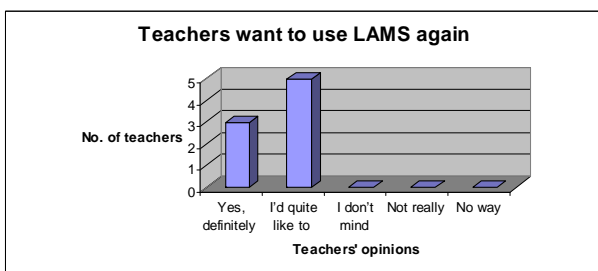The experiences of the learners and teachers indicate that Barnet College should support the training of more ESOL teachers to make use of LAMS so that they can utilise the existing LAMS sequences and create new ones at all levels. This would include the use of branching, which is now available and supports differentiation. If this proves successful, LAMS could be introduced to other departments in the College.

Costs and benefits

The financial costs were as follows

- To host LAMS on LAMS International's server cost £1,000 for a year which included technical support via e-mail.

- To train 8 teachers to use LAMS using the University of Greenwich's workshops cost £120 per person.

- Additional staff support and administration cost approximately £3,000.

The total cost was £5,000.

Staff time spent on LAMS was as follows

- 6 hours: workshops and work at home.

- 3 hours: other training.

- 6 hours: to create a sequence in LAMS (2 hours for subsequent sequences).

- 2 hours: to deliver a sequence.

- 1 hour: to evaluate the experience.

The total time spent by each member of staff was approximately twenty hours. Due to some technical issues with the server, some teachers had to re-create parts of their sequences; this took a further two hours.

The teachers put in an enormous effort to create their first LAMS sequence but were rewarded by a very positive response from the learners.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

LAMS was successfully introduced to eight enthusiastic teachers who were prepared to make it a successful experience for themselves and their learners. It required huge commitment in time and effort. The teachers needed continuous support, individually and collectively, before they were able to deliver a sequence which they felt met their learners' needs and was fit for purpose.

Despite technical difficulties, the teachers want to use LAMS again. They want to use each other's sequences and create new ones which can be shared across the department.

Because of the enthusiasm of the teachers and learners, it is hoped that other teachers in the ESOL department will be encouraged to create and deliver lessons using LAMS. The College would need to allocate an additional £5,000 for this purpose. If this further pilot is successful, LAMS could be introduced to other departments where learner-centred activity-based learning is widely used.

Potential users should note the following

- LAMS is successful where there is a close fit between the way teachers usually deliver lessons and the pedagogical tenets of LAMS.

- Do not underestimate how much time and effort it takes for teachers with weak computing skills to be able to use LAMS effectively.

- Spend time getting teachers to evaluate colleagues' sequences before these are delivered to students.

- Ensure that you have a shared folder in LAMS divided into levels or topics and add all the sequences so that everyone can use them.

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eMentors: using students to teach the teachers to use technology appropriately

Richard Everett (Consultant, Intelligent Builders Limited; formerly Director of e-Learning, Oaklands College)

1. The organisations

Intelligent Builders Limited is an educational consultancy specialising in e-learning and new 'intelligent' building strategies. Its director Richard Everett was formerly the Director of eLearning at Oaklands College in Hertfordshire, a college transforming and revolutionising the learning experience for its students.

2. Overview

The workshop linked to this case study analysed the eMentors approach, in which students teach the teachers to use technology appropriately. The case study looks at the vision and strategy of the College, and how that is translated into a successful e-learning vision. It examines the leadership and other support required for success and describes the eMentors' role within that. The eMentors scheme is explored to show what eMentors do, how they receive recognition and payment, as well as how relevant data is used to evaluate the approach.

3. Details

Approach

Vision and strategy: Successful e-learning and technology strategies all start with a corporate vision. In the Oaklands College vision there are four strategic aims. The first two (attraction and learner experience) lead to the third (success). In 2008 the College was graded as 'satisfactory' by Ofsted, and now is well on the way to achieving 'good', the target for 2009, and therefore to achieve its ultimate ambition to be 'outstanding' by 2011. This is the same year the College plans to be occupying its new building. The role of director of eLearning is to secure the use of the technology, not procuring equipment, making the network work, fixing computers etc, which are the responsibility of the estates staff.

As well as a college vision there is an e-learning vision which has pedagogy at the centre. The College is moving from a traditional book-learning culture to a predominantly e-learning one. This is not a complete replacement; it may well be that gradually over time the number of e-learning resources will outweigh more traditional media (books, journals etc) but will never totally replace them; there will always be an important place for such media. When the College gave students access to all the Web 2.0 technology the network couldn't cope. It did not have a sufficiently robust infrastructure to cope with the demand; one year later it still does not. The network is better but students still do not have full unfettered access to all of these technologies as they should do. In the new building they will have, but that point has not yet been reached. The College gives an entitlement to students (as part of the attraction and learner experience themes) that they will get a better technology experience than at home. It is challenging to achieve this, but that is the intention in the new building (and hopefully before that too).

Leadership: The College invested considerable amounts of money in its infrastructure with electronic whiteboards installed into every classroom. A wireless network was installed so that every classroom was on the network (with hindsight this did not have enough capacity). Laptops were given to staff (and subsequently all A level students as a pilot). All staff signed a new contract that made it a requirement that they had to achieve Level 2 in ICT (as well as English and Mathematics). Five days holiday a year were 'taken away' and were given back once this was achieved (during an interim period of two years the five days could be used to undertake the necessary training and certification). The Principal said it was the most unpopular thing he had ever done – but the long term result showed huge benefits with all staff (including non-curriculum staff) being capable of exhibiting at least a basic ICT competence.

Support: How do colleges support such ubiquitous technology? With only four and a half e-learning personnel to support 600 curriculum staff this was clearly a challenge. Students have very high expectations now. They expect technology to be used in their learning; if it isn't they will go to establishments where it is.

The College e-strategies were all part of a coherent strategic approach. The eMentors scheme is the 'jewel in the crown' and has had a major impact on the e-learning competence of the organisation. For example, in two packs distributed to staff of roughly 30 cards each, practitioners will find at least two or three cards that are relevant to their circumstances. They are written by practitioners for practitioners and offer ICT solutions to pedagogical problems in the classroom or workshop. These are solutions to problems in the classroom first and foremost, then only subsequently suggest ICT mechanisms to support that need.

eInnovations is a scheme using the College's own money to create a £50k capital fund into which staff can bid to do something truly innovative and capable of being deployed in the new building when it is built. The scheme gave £11k to an eMentor student to run a feedback initiative using video rather than paper.

Finally, eInterventions were used to elicit feedback from students about their experience in the classroom and to identify the things that are most effective in promoting learning in the classroom. This showed that the most effective thing practitioners can do in the classroom is give feedback to their students, although this should also be from student to teacher.

eMentors scheme: An eMentor is a student who teaches the teacher to use the technology appropriately. The 'digital natives' come to colleges with very good basic ICT skills learned in part from school and, for many, in their bedrooms late at night. So why not harness this to support staff who are struggling with what are very basic problems? These problems are enough to stop them utilising the technology at all. However, if students are used in the class to resolve those niggling little problems, then those tutors are able to develop and improve. They start using the technology without it getting in the way of their teaching.

The results are clear, with the relationships between the eMentors and lecturers (and subsequently relationships with the whole class) improving hugely from a more static approach to a more dynamic stance. With the more collaborative technique, a much more active style of teaching ensues. In addition the feedback has been very effective, creating a virtuous circle of improvement with students learning from staff and staff learning from students. The scheme has also resulted in the direct influencing of policy by eMentors. For example, one eMentor suggested that the process for handing in assignments in a curriculum area was not consistent. She suggested that it should be policy that all

assignments were given out and taken in via the virtual learning environment (VLE). This was taken up by the curriculum area and subsequently by the College.

Funding opportunities (e.g. MoLeNET) have arisen for the eMentors system but this project was internally funded at first. The (now) corporate status means that it is unlikely to get further ongoing funding from such national schemes and is sustained by the fact that it does not rely on external support. Feedback from Ofsted suggested that the individual learning plans of students should reflect this extra activity and this is now implemented by curriculum teams.

What do eMentors do? There is a job description for eMentors. They are expected to attend three briefing sessions a year (for which they are paid a £10 music voucher). The first meeting is an induction session. It is not necessary to teach students the technical skills, but it is necessary to support them in the way that they mentor and support staff. Students have needed help with this; where that mentoring support is given its effect is noticeable. The second meeting supports the eMentors by enabling them to exchange good practice (which is happening through the VLE on a continuous basis) and the third session looks back at the experience and gains feedback on how to improve the scheme.

The students give feedback to external visitors (e.g. to Ofsted) and gain an opportunity in this that they would otherwise not have. Their most important role, however, is helping staff to use the technology in the classroom/workshop. But increasingly they are also seen by fellow students as the first source of assistance.

Sharing e-learning good practice is taking place organically as a result of this scheme. When one tutor/teacher does something exemplary it spreads to other tutors in the same area that the class group attends. The students have also started reporting faults to the IT helpdesk. This was initially resisted by ICT staff but the fact that problems got reported at all, and in more detail than previously, soon changed this attitude. The benefit is that now many more computers are available (because a higher percentage are working) than was previously the case.

Scale
In the first year of the project 40 eMentors were recruited covering areas which included Health and Social Care, IT, Art, Media and Design, and Construction. Around 800 students were directly affected by the scheme (and many more indirectly). In the second (full) year this expanded to 100 eMentors (including MoLeMentors) and eMentors were present on most of the College's courses in every curriculum area (2000+ learners affected). It should be noted that over half of the curriculum areas covered were non-IT courses. All areas of the college (four different campuses) were involved including (and documented for MoLeNET) students with specific learning difficulties or disabilities.

Impact
An overall increase of 6% in success rates was recorded in 2006-7 where eMentors were present; an overall increase of 8% in retention was recorded in 2007-8. Lower increases were evident in eInterventions but significant improvements were still recorded. The success of the eInnovations project outlined above resulted in feedback being made by students to camera in an interactive kiosk; the video records their feedback and this is distributed through the quality processes. Finally, after the first full year of the eMentor scheme, the increase in usage of the VLE in September 2008 (compared to the previous year) was 500%

An article in the Becta annual review was the first national recognition of the scheme. The Times Educational Supplement (TES) included an article of the project. There was a BBC News article as well as publicity in the newsletter of the regional support centre for the Eastern Region. The Institute for Learning (IfL) has published a case study which documents the scheme and includes some of the eMentors' experiences. The scheme received the Tony Burgess memorial award at the CEL awards for the learner voice in 2008.

Costs and benefits

The first inducement to students was a free USB stick (now 1 GB), valued because students often had to buy these for transporting their work between home and college, Secondly the eMentors are entered for the eMentor of the year award at the College's student achievement awards. But the most important recognition the eMentors get is a guaranteed reference. This is valued by them and by local employers who rate more highly students who have done more than their normal studies. The College also gives the students extra print credits and music vouchers for key meeting attendance. In 2008, with MoLeNET funding, the eMentors were given a telephone worth about £400, although this is not sustainable after the end of project funding. Some of the more exemplary eMentors have even visited other colleges and national conferences on a consultancy basis.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

In the first year during the project stages the scheme worked because of the effort (and value accorded to it) by individual lecturers and tutors. This has been built upon by making it a corporate scheme but it doesn't have to be implemented that way. Some staff were resistant to the scheme at first but once some tutors/lecturers implemented the scheme it spread very quickly because of its obvious value (to both staff and students).

eMentors cannot exist in isolation and need to be part of a wider approach. Without the support of a central college support team they could not have operated so successfully, not least because they did not have the mentoring and supporting skills at first.

5. Contact details

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Enhancing inclusiveness through the use of mobile and assistive technologies

Titilola Olukoga (College ILT Champion) and
Alison Mills (Head of Assessment)

1. The organisation

The Manchester College is a new institution, created by the merger of Manchester College of Arts and Technology and City College Manchester. The College is one of the largest further education colleges in Europe, offering an unprecedented range of courses and suite of facilities to over 43,000 learners across more than 20 sites in Manchester.

The College's curriculum spans almost all vocational areas and all levels from entry to higher education. We deliver an extensive range of courses across the city, offering local adults the chance to learn new skills, update existing ones and improve their job prospects.

2. Overview

The College's mobile and assistive technologies initiative is part of the LSN MoLeNET project and the LSC-funded Enhancing Lives programme for the North West region. In addition, funding was secured from the senior management team at the College to build on and extend the success of the funded projects to more areas of the 20 campuses which constitute The Manchester College.

The use of mobile and assistive technologies has proved to be particularly effective and beneficial with learners who need additional support to engage with the learning process. Tutors and support workers have reported noticeable enhanced group cohesiveness, and significant improvements in learner engagement, performance, confidence and independence. The more able learners are able to employ mobile technologies independently; whilst tutors are freed up to support the less able learners.

3. The detail

Approach

A robust initial assessment system at the College identifies the immense need for support. Having identified the need, we researched ways of engaging learners through the use of assistive technologies including hardware and software. In January 2007 we purchased software licences to support learners across all sites and curriculum segments.

Subsequently, we obtained funding from the LSN MoLeNET 1 project, the LSC-funded Enhancing Lives programme in January 2008, and further funding from the College in July 2008. Tutors have sound knowledge of technical and commercial equipment and could implement the resources with minimal support from IT services.

Research findings indicate that the ability to incorporate information, images, animations and quizzes provides variety which sustains learners' interests where other teaching techniques may not. In addition, the use of multimedia has been reported to have the potential to enhance motivation, interactivity, flexibility and collaboration (Zubas et al, 2006, JISC, 2004).

The mobile and assistive technologies projects were initially piloted with the preparing for work and independence group. The group consists of learners with moderate learning

difficulties operating at entry levels 1-3. The learners have low self-esteem, low levels of literacy/numeracy skills, poor memory, limited independent learning and social skills. The focus therefore was on engaging and enabling these learners by building their confidence, and enhancing social and employability skills, as well as raising levels of literacy and numeracy skills.

The projects employed a range of technologies which are fit-for-purpose and which suit the learners' preferences (e.g. those which can help learners to achieve individualised practical targets and enable them to take ownership of their work and progress, thus developing greater self confidence). With the support of one of the tutors who is adept in the use of technologies, the project developed successfully. Other staff were trained and they in turn supported the learners in using the new technologies.

Subsequently, the model was introduced to the College 'skill zones' where other disadvantaged learners from various curriculum areas have benefited from the use of these technologies.

Scale
Approximately 20 students and five staff were involved in the initial phase. The success of further bids made the resource available to over 1000 potential students and a further 45 staff across the college sites. The project, which commenced in January 2007, is still in progress and the College has been successful in participating in the LSN's LSC-funded MoLeNET 2 project.

Impact
The use of mobile and assistive technologies has proved to be particularly effective and beneficial with learners who need additional support to engage with the learning process. Feedback from learners has been very positive, with noticeably increased motivation and achievement levels as well as enhanced social and independence skills.

Tutors and support workers have reported clearly enhanced group cohesiveness, and a significant improvement in learner engagement, performance, confidence and independence. In spite of the general notion that there is no single solution for accessibility and the issues associated with this, learners with differing abilities and learning preferences have been able to use technologies in ways that have addressed their specific learning needs and styles.

The positive results that have been observed from the mobile learning projects have raised the profile of the College in being committed to creating an inclusive learning environment where learners are supported and inspired to achieve their potential. The College has since obtained the British Dyslexia Association quality mark

Costs and benefits
The software licences have cost in the region of £15,000 to provide assistive technology on every PC in the College on all campuses and serving approximately 19,000 potential learners. To date staff in six curriculum areas as well as the majority of the skills for learning department have been trained in using the software.

Hardware has ranged from items such as simple 'go talk' buttons at a cost of £5 per item and 'talking photo' albums at £20, to MP3/MP4 players at £99, lightweight PCs at £197 and laptops at £350. The most expensive items were two interactive whiteboard touch screens at a cost of around £5,500.

Considerable time and effort has been spent on purchasing quality goods at the best possible prices, liaising with the College finance department to create purchase orders, awaiting delivery, security-marking equipment, ensuring safe storage, and training staff in using the equipment.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

- Staff training and development is essential.

- Identify staff who are keen to develop the use of technologies. This is crucial, as commitment is needed to sustain the project when problems arise.

- The senior management team needs to endorse the project and provide appropriate support including training and funding.

- Involve your IT services in the project plan. This is key, as without technical support the project is deemed to fail.

- Put a project plan in place including SMART objectives and feasible timescales.

- Engage with reliable educational ICT suppliers who are also able to provide advice and support.

The primary consideration in making effective use of technologies is to use those that are fit-for-purpose. Having a clear understanding of how technologies can potentially develop skills, build confidence levels, spur enthusiasm and improve efficiency is therefore crucial. This understanding, however, stems from a fundamental knowledge of the learners, their personality, disposition, interests, needs, skills levels, challenges, learning preferences and apprehensions. Initial assessment is essential; on top of this is the willingness of the facilitator to make reasonable adjustments and to create an atmosphere that encourages innovation and liberates the learner to explore new approaches comfortably.

5. Contact details

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How staff support each other in their professional development through the use of Pebble Pad e-portfolios

Jo Walter (Distance Learning Tutor),
Alan Earp (Motor Vehicle Maintenance Tutor),
Alison Gray (Lifelong lLearning Co-Ordinator) and
Megan Booker (Essential Skills Tutor)

1. The organisation

Thanet College serves the population of the Isle of Thanet and the surrounding area situated in East Kent and comprising the seaside towns of Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Margate. It is a general further education college of medium size.

2. Overview

This handout accompanied a presentation from four tutors from Thanet College. They explained how, from different and personal perspectives, they have come to rely on each other for evaluation, appraisal and support using Pebble e-portfolios. The session included how they now take responsibility for accounting for themselves by gathering in their portfolio experiences that occur in their working day. The presentation was supported by live examples taken from each presenter's portfolio.

3. Details

Approach

Following initial training, staff are encouraged to collect 'assets' in their portfolio to draw on later. The observation process was used to draw staff into the formal procedures. 'Leading improvement' facilitators fostered wider and more general use. The volume of usage came about by teachers communicating with others, eliciting a response through the portfolio mechanism. Peer pressure is perhaps the best way to broaden take-up.

Scale

150 teachers have used portfolios for nine months, some for longer. 40 supporting staff have joined the group. A pilot of 15 HNC computer studies students is operating.

Impact

Had we not embarked on using portfolios

- Tutors would not have had a mechanism to support their personal development.

- We would not have been able to engender such a strong sense of professional autonomy for personal development.

- Staff would be more passive in achieving their own development, reliant on the College to stipulate what was required.

- We would be ill-prepared to cope with helping learners use portfolios.

There is a stronger sense of professional community amongst staff as they look to each other for help and support.

The College recently introduced sets of professional standards for each member of staff which are being incorporated into portfolios. Evidence can be adduced as attachments to show how the standards are being met. Portfolios provide the perfect vehicle to support staff gathering evidence of compliance.

Costs and benefits

Each portfolio costs around £12. Tutors will be able to keep ownership of the portfolios and will take them and the contents with them when they leave College.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

Using portfolios in this way increases teacher autonomy. It asks them to take control of their own development and to account for it. Because of the personal nature of portfolios, tutors use them in ways not necessarily thought of at start-up. This is a healthy sign of usage and should be encouraged. Applying for internal vacancies is a case in point. Portfolios are good at capturing summarised thoughts but less good at developing formative assessment. When coming to write in a portfolio it normally means that the author has reached a rounded view and entries therefore tend to be summative in nature.

Apart from recording conventional CPD, tutors have found that reflection can be added to any critical incident recorded to create CPD. So much is now sensitive to CPD that was previously lost. Gathering 30 hours CPD in 12 months will not prove difficult at all. Portfolios are excellent at capturing accidental learning and authentic learning experiences because the writer can reflect on any learning within the circumstances of their life, work and experience.

Whilst it was hoped that tutors would share with professional colleagues across the College, sharing is mainly occurring between colleagues where there is a pre-existing friendship or a more formal agreed relationship such as mentorship. Work destined for assessment (trainee teachers completing CETLLS etc) is shared first with a respected colleague as a 'critical friend'.

It was found that the opportunity and range of items on which to reflect is as wide as there are tutors in the community, and the personalisation properties of e-portfolios really do support the unique approaches to portfolio building. Consequently, whilst the process is relatively simple, the nature of the relationships and what is discussed is complex.

E-portfolios represent a new way of capturing information, but it is gathered in an individual area that is private. There is an organisational culture of storing information centrally; consequently an accommodation needs to be found that meets the legitimate needs of the employing college. This has led to the development of individual leaning plans for learners and a new staff training central record.

In addition:

- Tutors need to have something familiar to use in their portfolio, so start by asking that all course evaluations and observation activity be channelled through the portfolio using familiar form layouts such as evaluation forms. At the same time remove the old system.

- We also found it useful to have tutors familiar with Facebook to lead others in the value of a personal space. They tended to be younger members of staff, but not exclusively.

- Staff were concerned about time issues to complete entries. It is important to decide what now does not have to be done elsewhere to accommodate the new approach.

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How the Excellence Gateway and e-learning leadership programmes and toolkits can support CPD

Punam Khosla (Director, LSIS Leadership Toolkits) and
Barry Kruger (Director, Knowledge and Intelligence)

1. The organisation

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) is a sector-owned public body, established by the UK government on 1 October 2008 as the result of a merger between two highly successful national sector bodies: the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA).

The role of LSIS is to support the government's skills agenda by raising standards of leadership, management, and teaching and learning across the vocational education, skills and lifelong learning sector. This sector, which employs some one million staff, is responsible for delivering the employability skills critical to the government's agenda for maximising national economic prosperity and productivity. As well as its sector-wide strategic role in research and policy development, LSIS is responsible for contracting and delivering a huge range of professional development programmes and bespoke services for whole institutions, governors, senior managers, teaching and support staff.

LSIS is at the heart of a network of national agencies with complementary responsibilities for quality improvement and standards in the learning and skills sector.

2. Overview

LSIS has developed a range of e-learning programmes for managers and leaders across the further education and skills sector. These programmes encourage both personal and organisational development.

The toolkits are an online resource designed by LSIS to improve leadership. Tailored specifically to meet the needs of leaders and managers, LSIS's three online leadership toolkits provide crucial learning opportunities when users really need them most.

The Excellence Gateway aims to help transform delivery across the learning and skills sector by becoming the recognised web channel where practitioners at all levels can access high quality resources and information, inspire innovation, and share best practice.

3. Details

Approach

These resources have been developed in partnership with national agencies in the sector including OFSTED, IfL, LSC, ALP, and NIACE. The leadership programmes put sector need and consultation at the heart of what LSIS does to develop specialised online learning for providers.

Scale

The work-based learning toolkit is used by one in four independent learning providers in the UK. In terms of related web site usage of the specialist leadership toolkits, the work-based learning site has had 474 average hits per month, the adult and community learning site has

had 813 average hits per month since May 2008, and the independent specialist colleges' site has had 582 average hits per month since May 2008.

An evaluation in August 2007 showed that 62% of practitioners regularly refer to the Excellence Gateway as part of their day-to-day work. The Gateway has almost 100,000 unique visitors per month, with 10,500 registered users, 12,000 resources, and partnerships with national organisations such as Ofsted, LSC, Becta, NIACE, ALP and the AoC.

Impact

Feedback from practitioners on the leadership toolkits includes, "Having the WBL Toolkit is like having a consultant available 24 hours a day. The toolkit has enabled me personally to back up ideas formally" and, "Within two weeks of induction one of our managers has already used the toolkit to inform her strategic planning."

The Excellence Gateway collects a wide variety of services into one place, from evidence and case studies, teaching resources and exemplars, forums, networks and collaborative tools, news, jobs and events. Personalisation and efficient navigation contribute to more efficient teaching and learning experiences.

The leadership toolkits promote whole organisational improvement in a wide variety of areas. Impact studies are now underway to measure total organisational development and will be available in the summer of 2009.

Costs and benefits

Leadership toolkits cost £27.25 per user. This price includes a 50% subsidy for LSC-funded organisations. Subscriptions to the resource are sold in ten-user blocks. A cost benefit analysis in April 2008 showed that the Excellence Gateway spent £500,000 less than its predecessor services.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

The e-learning resources have been designed to assist leaders in all aspects of the management of their organisation. Rich activities, tips, links and templates make it a one-stop shop for professional development and organisational change. The work-based learning leadership toolkit has recently been awarded the BETT award 2009 for supporting institutional leadership and management solutions.

The Excellence Gateway is fully personalised for registered users and has CPD as a central theme. Users can learn from a variety of different perspectives, whether it is from a case study or peer-to-peer networking.

5. Contact details

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Inspiring tutors in adult community learning

Gill Thomas (Curriculum Support, Visual Arts) and
Jane Carter-Dunn (e-Learning Development Officer)

1. The organisation

Adult Education in Gloucestershire is a sub-contracting adult and community learning (ACL) provider with approximately 40 staff serving 12,500 learners. Adult Education in Gloucestershire contracts with 24 different organisations across the county, from large further education colleges to very small voluntary organisations such as the Chinese Women's Guild and African Caribbean Association. It employs a small team of curriculum support tutors who work within specific areas to support provider tutors in their teaching and learning. The vast majority of tutors are part-time, some working as little as two hours per week, and are employed by the sub-contracted organisations. A range of courses is offered across a large, rural county. Courses take place in community venues, with no access to whiteboards or the Internet, as well as in local schools and colleges.

2. Overview

The related presentation aimed to show how part-time tutors in remote locations were enthused with the potential of e-learning, how simple the equipment is to use, and how ideas and experience are shared by means of a blog.

3. Details

Approach

To the horror of our management and finance teams, we took the equipment out of the cupboards and gave it to the tutors to take home. We believed that one of the reasons it was not being used was tutors' lack of confidence in their abilities. We had provided training but when equipment was used only occasionally it was difficult for tutors to retain associated skills. We encouraged the tutors to use the equipment on a personal level, to take photographs for own use and so on. This developed their confidence and helped them to see how the technology could be used in teaching and learning.

Once this basic level of confidence was achieved we were amazed at what our non-technical tutors tried out in their classrooms. They started uploading photographs of their learners' work to Flickr and videos to YouTube. Tutors were supported by curriculum team members who set up their own 'buddying' arrangements and a blog where questions could be posted and a quick response relied upon.

Our experience soon showed that this - getting the kit directly into the tutors' hands for practice when it suited them - was a method which worked.

When we were successful in a further capital bid (for NIACE CaMeL funding) we took the decision to purchase lots of small items of kit rather than larger, more costly items, and to involve as many tutors as possible. Building on feedback from the original team of tutors, we organised a training event where we provided 45-minute sessions on the use of various pieces of equipment; tutors were invited to attend three of these. Following this event we no longer have to invite people to start using the equipment; they are now emailing us and asking us when they can have their own kit.

Scale

When we started this project we had only a small group of tutors, initially three arts tutors, who were then joined by literacy, numeracy and language tutors, family learning tutors and some tutors working with adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. Using these enthusiastic staff as advocates we are making equipment available to more tutors, via their provider organisations.

Impact

We asked our tutors how confident they felt with the use of IT and e-learning equipment before they received their kit and again six months later. With the exception of one tutor, who rated his IT skills as high at the start, all have increased their confidence and ability with IT and are using it in the classroom. Tutors reported that they now routinely consider whether and how IT can enhance their sessions.

Learners were also surveyed to see whether the use of IT in sessions had had a positive impact on their learning. We held focus groups with learners and the feedback was very positive. Learners felt that they had not only benefited from technology being used in the session to enhance their learning but it had encouraged them to get to grips with technology and how it could be used outside their learning.

Comments included the following:

"I'd like to say how using technology has increased the enjoyment of these sessions… a photo slideshow of the projects we have completed gave us all a sense of achievement. Thank you for introducing this technology to teachers. I feel I am getting so much out of it."

"It changes the way they teach; we have become more of a group, rather than the teacher standing at the front."

"At the end of the session I asked how useful the slide show had been. They all said that it was inspiring… They all agreed it was great to be introduced to so many artists and to see completed pieces. For me it's a great way of showing some of the photos I have from a variety of sources, especially those from national shows."

"I Google everything now."

"I was taught how to use my [own] digital camera as we went along."

"I can do things I couldn't before, like buy tickets [online]."

The training event we ran raised awareness of e-learning among our partner organisations. This awareness has led to managers taking a greater interest in e-learning and requesting additional equipment for use in their organisations. We feel that this increased awareness will have an impact on the quality and amount of e-learning taking place in community learning and this will be measured through the observation process.

We have

- Established a reflective community of practice for teams of hard-to-reach staff who face many barriers (time, distance, contractual, lack of remission, conflicting employer needs and so on).

- Built stronger relationships with providers and individual staff members so that distant tutors feel a valued part of a cohesive team.

- Opened up a vibrant debate on what makes good teaching, training and learning.

- Made impressive progress in terms of deploying and harnessing technology; there is now a demand for the equipment from tutors and providers and it is actively used to benefit learners.

- Received valuable feedback from learners and staff alike.

Costs and benefits

The costs for this project were covered by a capital funding grant of £20,000 from a NIACE CaMeL bid and £35,000 from a 'whole organisation approach' project funded by the then QIA. This project covered the development of subject learning coaches, training for tutors and a dissemination event which allowed us to cascade the lessons learned to staff in the majority of our partner organisations.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

- Don't underestimate how long projects take to gain momentum and plan using realistic timescales.

- Be aware of outside constraints over which you have little or no influence; build time into the project life span to overcome them.

- Have a contingency plan for overcoming problems with critical outcomes/milestones (especially for those that will have the greatest influence over the success or failure of the project).

- Allocate dedicated time to the project manager; this person, and their ability and time to lead the project, is critical. They must have enough 'free' time to do the job properly.

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It's mobile and it's glossy

James Clay (ILT and Learning Resources Manager, Gloucestershire College)

1. The organisation

Gloucestershire College is one of the largest further education colleges in the UK, offering a wide range of education and training programmes, including A Levels and GCSEs, vocational qualifications, work-based learning, basic skills courses, higher education, short courses for business, part-time day and evening courses and English for overseas students. Gloucestershire College's Gloucester campus is a brand new state-of-the-art site based alongside the Gloucester Docks with a strong vocational focus. The College's Cheltenham-based campus is a purpose-built facility at Princess Elizabeth Way.

2. Overview

The Glossy project did much more than start Gloucestershire College in its use of mobile learning. It had an impact on the whole culture of the organisation in the use of not just mobile technologies, but also other learning technologies: audio, video, podcasting, wireless and use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to enhance and enrich the learning experience. We are now a college with the infrastructure to embed mobile learning across the curriculum.

This handout relates to a hands-on workshop, allowing delegates to experience mobile learning for themselves. Mobile technologies were used by the participants within the workshop to examine how they can be used for learning and were also used to feed back the outcomes from the workshop. Small groups of participants examined the potential of mobile technologies and mobile learning for their institutions. The workshop aimed to allow delegates to talk and discuss the concept of mobile learning with each other, so sceptics would be able to see that it is not just Gloucestershire College which is using mobile learning, but that other institutions across the UK are embedding and using mobile technologies to enhance and enrich learning.

3. Details

Approach

The Glossy project undertook a large-scale development and implementation of mobile learning across Gloucestershire College, utilising the mobile devices that learners already own. A comparative study was made by providing a range of mobile devices for learners in excluded groups at Gloucestershire College and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities at National Star College. The project put in place an infrastructure at Gloucestershire College that will allow learners using devices which they already own to access learning activities and content through a mobile learning portal in conjunction with the College VLE. The project will create a student wireless network that can be accessed by learners' own devices to access college services, e-resources and the Internet.

The aim of the project was to enable learners to access learning at a time and place to suit them in order to improve retention and achievement. The project provided mobile devices to learners in selected groups, including excluded learners and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. The project provided hardware and software that will allow both staff and learners to develop, create and convert content for use on mobile devices. The project

provided the infrastructure to allow the College and staff to communicate with learners' mobile devices through the use of 802.11 wireless and Bluetooth technologies.

Scale

The £216,000 project had an impact on 14,000 learners during the lifetime of the project which ran from November 2007 to July 2008. It continues to have a benefit now the project has finished as the infrastructure enables mobile learning to continue.

Impact

The project has enabled the infrastructure to allow practitioners to enrich and enhance the learning experience for learners. Learners can access learning at a time and place to suit them, through the college VLE, through mobile devices and whether they be in college, at work, in the home, or elsewhere. Due to the timeframe of the project it is not possible to say with any definitive proof that the project has improved retention and achievement, as there are many other contributing factors across the College which have had a similar effect. Overall there has been an improvement in retention and achievement and the Glossy project has contributed to that improvement.

The key benefits for learners were

- A change in culture in relation to the use of mobile learning by the College; as a result more staff are interested in creating, developing and adapting learning scenarios and content for mobile learning or using mobile devices. This has made and will make learning more interesting and fun for learners.

- A student wireless network, which allows learners to connect to the Internet in college with their mobile devices and so engage and interact with learning activities and content.

- An infrastructure which allows learners to access learning at a time, place, pace and mode to suit their needs.

- Opportunity to try equipment seen by students as the latest technology.

- Ability to take resources to different locations easily.

- Ability to record their own progress and identify when they had achieved.

- Recognisably more independent working.

- Increased familiarisation with ICT.

- Expectation that ICT would be integrated into other learning.

The key benefits for staff have been:

- Changing working practices and perceptions in staff about what is learning and how and where learning can take place.

- An infrastructure that allows staff easily to create, develop and adapt learning scenarios and content for mobile learning or using mobile devices.

- Training and information on mobile learning and mobile devices.

- Challenged and stretched experience of using ICT.

- Ability to take on a facilitative approach with learners.

- Engagement with learners at external locations.

- Support and networking through the partner college.

- Support and networking through the MoLeNET community.

The key benefits for Gloucestershire College were

- A change in culture across the organisation in the use of mobile learning and mobile devices to enhance and enrich the learning experience.

- The installation of an infrastructure to support mobile learning which has also had extra benefits.

- A (possible) improvement in retention and achievement.

- The key lesson when working with practitioners is that simply providing the technology is not enough. Training and development is essential if practitioners are to change their practice and to start embedding mobile learning. Training needs include:

- *How to use the equipment:* With the variety of equipment available it can be thought just using one type of mobile device would be an advantage. However no mobile device can do everything and that is part of the problem. The interfaces and processes which devices use differ from device to device.

- *Uses of the equipment:* It was apparent very early on that practitioners were often unaware of the potential and the capability of various mobile devices even when they owned them themselves. An example of this is how some fourteen year-old learners taught the College's ILT manager how to add photographic effects to the photographs taken by the Play Station camera.

- *File management:* Moving files around requires effective file management skills and, despite some practitioners having excellent skills in the use of learning technologies in the delivery of learning, they often lacked simple file management skills.

- *Software training:* Even when software is as simple as drag and drop, training and development in software used for the creation, development and delivery of mobile learning materials is required. When staff move onto more complicated software training is essential.

- *Learning scenarios and design:* Practitioners also needed guidance and advice on how to build mobile learning into their delivery; often they would not realise the potential of mobile learning to enhance and enrich the learning experience of their learners.

- *Overcoming the myths:* It's surprising how often the phrase "this won't work with my students" is heard when using (any) learning technology is mentioned. It is important when introducing new learning technologies and innovative learning scenarios that these myths are dispelled.

Costs and benefits

The project funding only covered capital equipment (and a restricted list of capital equipment at that) and as a result the College needed to provide a project manager, a lead practitioner researcher, and m-champions, as well as IT, financial, administrative and management support.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

As with any project there is 'what you would like to do', 'what you should do' and 'what you can do'. With the focus on capital and no funding for staff time, even with senior management support and a commitment from college teams, it was not going to be as simple as some would expect. Suggestions were made by the LSN on how to manage and staff the project, so the College took those suggestions and modified them to suit local needs and priorities.

The Glossy project allowed Gloucestershire College to implement and develop an infrastructure for mobile learning. This means that the College will continue with mobile learning next year, the year after and so on. Gloucestershire College has started embedding mobile learning into the blend of delivery mechanisms available to practitioners for teaching and learning. By focussing on the infrastructure behind what is required to support and deliver mobile learning, the College has ensured that, through the Glossy project, it has a sustainable, scalable and robust infrastructure that will last many years and will be able to be upgraded as and when needed. Some of the equipment the College has purchased is expected to last up to ten years. Alongside the purchase of hardware, the promotion and marketing of mobile learning has taken place. In the next academic year, learners will be using mobile devices to support their learning, and practitioners will be designing, developing and using mobile learning scenarios to enrich and enhance the learning process. At present mobile learning within Gloucestershire College is being consolidated; it will start to be embedded over the next academic year. It is expected that, within three years, every learner will be using mobile learning at some point in their course to support, enhance or enrich their overall learning experience.

Overall the project was a success and of benefit to the learners and staff in the College.

The ethos and philosophy behind this mobile learning project is already being embraced and used by other colleges in the second round of MoLeNET funding. They are using the ideas and approaches for their own mobile learning infrastructure projects.

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Maximising value through peer support: sharing the journey to e-confidence through the Technology Exemplar Network

Sally-Anne Saull (Becta),
Robin Gadd (Brockenhurst College),
Rebecca Barrington (South Devon College) and
Mick Gilroy (ISIS Training)

1. The organisation

Becta leads the national drive to inspire and lead the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning. Its ambition is to create a more exciting, rewarding and successful experience for learners of all ages and abilities enabling them to achieve their potential. For this specific project it works with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and 62 provider organisations from the further education (FE) and skills sector.

2. Overview

In 2007-08 Becta and the LSC jointly launched the Technology Exemplar Network. The Network aimed to provide a structured system through which FE and skills organisations who were considered to be effectively harnessing technology in their organisations ('exemplars'), worked with providers who were making significant steps to develop and implement their technology strategy ('developing providers').

The Technology Exemplar Network, though still in early stages, has been an overwhelming success in terms of providing a peer support network to help providers bring about benefits from the use of technology.

3. Details

Approach

Organisations from the FE and skills sector were invited to apply for 'exemplar' or 'developing provider' status. Ten organisations were awarded exemplar status, and 52 further organisations awarded developing provider status.

With the exemplar organisations taking the lead, members of the Network then formed mini-networks and began to organise a series of formal and informal events to help them begin to benefit from the peer support that the network had to offer. In addition to events, the Network also uses Huddle to maintain contact electronically, and to share resources.

Scale

62 organisations from the FE and skills sector are currently benefiting from being members of the Technology Exemplar Network. It is hoped that the effect of this model and lessons learned will be communicated widely to benefit the wider sector.

Impact

It is still too early to measure the impact of the Technology Exemplar Network. However, anecdotal evidence and feedback from members of the Network suggests that benefits include cost savings bought about by learning from others experiences, better time

management, and learning about new ways of implementing a successful technology strategy in their organisation.

A full insight into the benefits to the organisations involved can be read in the document Exemplary Progress, which is available to download (or order) online (see website details below). The document provides a detailed overview to the background to the Technology Exemplar Network, and benefits being felt so far. Here are just some of the quotes from those involved in the Network:

"Just being part of the network of ten exemplar colleges enables us to compare best practice with other colleges and learn from them. Hopefully, they have learned from us as well. We are all starting from a fairly high base but doing things quite differently, so we still have much to learn from each other and should never neglect the opportunity to do so.

"Sharing leads to a swap-shop of ideas and products that benefit everyone. Some say you learn best from your mistakes and can't learn from those of others. That's nonsense. One of my bugbears is that there is so much reinventing the wheel right around the country. If this network becomes a campaign to stop reinventing the wheel and take short cuts, then so much the better.

"When developer colleges came to us they were keen to know how we got to that point of development. One of the things our college is well known for is the use of individual learning plans online, giving access to all students, staff and parents. We went through every possibility: Are there systems available? Do we create our own programmes? How do we develop them? Now we offer developing providers one way of taking short-cuts and learning from us." (Steve McCormack, Vice Principal, Alton College)

"We saved months of costly and time-consuming research into the management of social networking systems like Facebook and YouTube, by asking an information technology training provider in our mini-network to look at the problem." (Sheron Burton)

"As a training provider for hair and beauty, we applied for membership because we would be working with a large college which is totally different and has expertise we do not. We knew it would help us move forward much quicker than we would otherwise. Similarly, we are able to bring a totally different perspective to the college from the employer side. We would really like to work in permanent partnership with colleges. Everyone would benefit." (Brenda Allan, General Manager, HABIT [Hair and Beauty Industry Training Ltd])

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

Some of the challenges that the organisations involved have faced have been well articulated in the Exemplary Progress document (mentioned above). In their own words:

"The exemplar provider needs to keep up the momentum. Our group had little contact for a time, but when I said we will arrange an event by the end of the year then it all started up again. It's hard to do that at certain times of the year, with all the other priorities like recruitment and induction. But after that it's a good time to rekindle things and bring partners together." (Sheron Burton)

"We can pop down to Exeter [from Bournemouth], have a useful day there and get back in one day, but you can't do that to Doncaster, it needs at least two days. If the network continues for more than this year, we could take turns to go to each other's establishments. We're looking at having a future event at a developing college, it makes sense geographically." (Chris Frost)

"There are questions about whether we have sufficient guidance. But this is a new way of working and I say rather than formalise it they should pull it together in a way that offers both flexibility and structure. You can lose touch with people because you are always so busy. This scheme forces us to connect with people." (Sandra Partington)

"The challenge for the network is to carry on, there needs to be a purpose and direction behind it. There needs to be some incentive behind it and some technical expert input; we need to buy that in". (Keith Bate)

5. Contact details

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Podcasting in science teaching: useful intervention or worthless interruption?

Phil George (e-Learning Manager) and
Nicky Read (e-Learning Support Co-Ordinator)

1. The organisation

Kingston College is a further education college with a high proportion of higher education students. The science degree foundation programme is run in conjunction with Kingston University and prepares students for continuation onto a science degree. The ILT support and development division has been established at Kingston College for three years and the College has a reputation for innovation in e-learning.

2. Overview

The conference presentation was about one aspect of the KASTANET project, a JISC-funded project and collaboration between Kingston College and Kingston University. A main thread of this project involved the creation and deployment of a variety of podcasts on the science degree foundation (SDF) programme. The workshop session was based on early outcomes from the project and sought to share some valuable experience for those interested in using podcasting on learning programmes for which they are responsible.

3. Details

Approach

A key area of interest within the KASTANET project was to examine the process of producing appropriate podcast resources for learners on the programme and then to try to understand what worked best from the learner perspective. The podcasts produced covered a variety of topics and pedagogic approaches to support learners in a number of different ways. Initially however the main task was to engage the SDF team and encourage them to produce podcasts in their teaching area, working with and training them in the creation of effective content.

Scale

The SDF programme has over 250 learners studying for progression to a science degree at Kingston University. The programme runs over one academic year. We engaged in a thorough information-gathering exercise prior to commencement of the project to get a picture of the common technology used by the learners, the types of mobile devices they owned and used, and details about access to web-linked PCs. During the run of the project, training sessions were regularly provided to groups of learners with a variety of resources which demonstrated how to access and download the podcasts, setting up RSS feeds and so on.

The KASTANET project ran over a two-year period concluding in March 2009. However the podcasting element was designed to address appropriate learner needs including: induction, orientation and progression, as well as preparation for examinations and introduction to modules. Alongside the core teaching team on SDF and course administrators, we also looked outside the specifics of science teaching and gathered podcasts from a wider community. This included university specialists, guest speakers, and tutors from other

faculties and schools. The wide variety of topics included forensics, stress management, marketing scientific ideas, magazine reviews and study skills.

Impact

The presentation looked at this area in much more detail and using technology-driven media. This included some basic information about what the students think and some useful feedback using student comments. The evaluation of the initiative showed that the overwhelming majority (86 and 87%) rated the extent to which lecturers used podcasting audio as appropriate and used appropriately, and as having a positive impact on their experience as a learner. 90% found the study skills podcasts useful.

This has been a valuable experience for the College and we have learned the answer to a number of key questions. Podcasting is certainly one of the more popular technologies for both teacher and learner alike, it is relatively simple, quick to implement and easy to access. It would appear that many learners actually benefited from using the podcasts (at least this is what they tell us). First indications suggest that we can take a cross-organisational approach to many podcast opportunities. For example, a well-structured set of podcast episodes based around study skills will be as useful to learners on a business programme as to those on a science programme, and a well-crafted induction podcast will help learners throughout the institution. This is especially valuable information when carrying out a cost benefit analysis.

Costs and benefits

The costs in terms of time, to manage and impel this project have been considerable, with much of this falling to the ILT support and development team. The complexity of management skills required to organise the relatively simple technical process of creating a podcast should not be underestimated. Whilst the SDF teachers were not resistant to these ideas, neither were they a priority for them. Hence the onus for pushing forward fell to others on the project team and ILT repeatedly had to take the initiative. There have been signs however that several tutors have recognised the benefit and started to create podcasts for their own learner groups.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

The most significant lessons learned from this project have been about motivation: motivation of learners, motivation of teachers and motivation of support staff. We are motivated by different things and a common mistake, made particularly by technology enthusiasts, is that others, both colleagues and learners, will be interested in the same things that interest us. This is clearly not the case and for technological solutions to have currency they must address a need for the user or offer valuable alternatives to existing practice. Podcasting on the science programme appears to have started to do this, at least in part. The organisation needs to be aware that in order for people to embrace new technologies, we must find what motivates them and ensure we take account of this.

What we have learned about podcasting is to

- Embed tasks in your podcasts.
- Deliver within a set framework, stating objectives.
- Produce user guides.

- Ensure they are not too long.

- Provide them as an alternative for teachers to use.

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Putting the e into eCPD: managing your CPD online with the LSIS programme Shaping My Future

Europe Singh (Strategic Associate e-Learning, LSIS) and
Ann Ruthven (Programme Lead Career Development and Safeguarding, LSIS)

1. The organisation

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) is the new sector-owned body, formed from CEL and QIA to develop excellent and sustainable provision across the sector. LSIS will work in partnership with all parts of the sector to provide vision, leadership, clarity and high quality support; practising and enabling continuous self-improvement and capacity building.

The LSIS (formerly CEL) leadership programmes continue to provide quality development opportunities for leaders and managers across the various parts of the further education (FE) system. Most programmes are delivered in a blended mode using a Moodle-based virtual learning environment (VLE). A few programmes are wholly online.

2. Overview

The eCPD project intends to develop professional development advisers drawn from within institutions and to engage them in developing the e-learning skills of their colleagues. These development activities will form part of the CPD commitment of the individuals concerned. The associated presentation demonstrated an online LSIS programme which enables staff in the sector to plan their careers and professional development on-line. The programme (Shaping my Future) is now available to institutions in the further education sector on an annual licence.

The aim of the programme is to provide individuals with a structured method for planning their career by

- Reflecting on their values, strengths and skills.
- Identifying gaps in their experience and establishing how best to fill them.
- Creating an improved CV.
- Establishing SMART goals and objectives to map their future career development.

The course helps users to

- Explore where they are in their current career plan.
- Clarify where they want to be.
- Work out how to get there.
- Use networking to their advantage.
- Find the right work/life balance.
- Identify methods and sources of support and development.

Answers and responses throughout the course are saved to a confidential personal development plan, which acts as both a repository for personal profile data and as a useful tool for reflection and the construction of career plans. It is the ideal support for CPD strategies in organisations.

The presentation demonstrated the programme and discussed the use of such tools in developing CPD in institutions across the sector. Part of an eCPD strategy must entail modelling e-learning for staff in the sector in their professional development so that they both see the value of the approach and appreciate the ways they can integrate technology into the delivery of their own programmes.

3. Details

Approach

Shaping My Future (SMF) was developed in response to the needs of busy managers in the FE system. Although these individuals would attend face-to-face professional development in relation to their posts, they felt that they could not give up time for their own career planning. Those that did attend the career development workshops appreciated how important these were in planning their career and CPD. The idea of an online, self-access programme to cover the major elements of career planning would be an ideal solution to the problem.

Scale

The programme was launched in October 2008 and has been made available to all participants on LSIS programmes. It is only just being made available to the sector as a whole.

Impact

It is too early to measure the impact on participants.

SMF has been enthusiastically received by LSIS programme leads as useful for their programme participants. We are working closely with the Institute for Learning (IfL) who see it as an ideal accompaniment to the Reflect tool in their CPD portfolio.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

For LSIS this is a really flexible addition to its career development service providing participants in face-to-face programmes with the opportunity to consolidate their learning.

We see this as a cost effective solution to providing career planning for busy staff in the FE sector fitting into the 30 hours CPD stipulation that most staff now have to undertake. It is available on the LSIS VLE so organisations access it through obtaining login details for staff. We do not know yet what, if any, problems may arise for having so many concurrent users if there is major take-up.

5. Contact details

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Quality e-learning for the masses

Alistair McNaught and
Sal Cooke

1. The organisation

The JISC TechDis service supports the education sector in achieving greater accessibility and inclusion by stimulating innovation and providing expert advice and guidance on disability and technology.

2. Overview

Nottingham University's e-learning team have developed a free open source online tool (Xerte) with a wide variety of pedagogically sound templates to allow staff with limited IT skill to create quality web-based learning resources with a high 'native' accessibility.

3. Details

Approach

The JISC TechDis service has been closely following the evolution of Xerte from a developer-focused programming aid to a mainstream content creation tool. Building a long-term relationship with the Nottingham team has exposed the tool to a much bigger audience and contributed to its development as a 'tool for the masses'. JISC TechDis has set up an online 'sand pit' area where practitioners can trial and demonstrate the tool before asking network teams to install it.

Scale

The tool was originally designed to support technical developers in a higher education context at the University of Nottingham. First introduced to a bigger audience at an ALT conference, it has now featured in the European eLearning Summit, several regional support centre summer fairs and a range of online training events covering adult and community learning, work-based learning and further and higher education.

Impact

The Xerte toolkit has huge benefit for learners by allowing non-technical teaching staff to assemble interactive learning materials of a high pedagogical quality, and by providing in-built tools that let learners personalise their view of the content and the way they interact with it.

For staff Xerte templates cover a wide range of skill levels making it suitable for a range of people from those who are just getting confident with PowerPoint through to those who design their own web pages.

The key benefit of Xerte for organisations is that those embedding the use of this tool to create content have arguably gone a long way to anticipating and meeting the needs of their disabled learners, whether or not they have disclosed a disability.

It is also a way of using the disability legislation to strengthen the e-learning agenda since the accessibility of the tool is demonstrably better than can be achieved by traditional teaching resources

Costs and benefits

There are no software costs since the product is free and open source. There are however staff costs in terms of installing the toolkit on a server and training staff to use it.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

The ultimate aim is to build a community of technical developers who can stimulate the creation of templates and further improve the accessibility of the tool. We have found it difficult to find technical developers with the appropriate skills; not because they don't exist but because they are not yet in a 'Xerte ecosystem'. We have changed our approach so that, by building a community of enthusiastic users at practitioner level, we create the conditions for technical developers in organisations to sit up, take notice and then meet the challenge of improving an already very good product.

5. Contact details

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REfLECT

Dr Jean Kelly (Director of Professional Development, IfL) and
Michelle Jennings (CPD Project Manager, IfL)

1. The organisation

The Institute for Learning (IfL) is the professional body for teachers, trainers, tutors, student teachers and assessors in the further education and skills sector. It provides a range of services and benefits to its 175,000 members by

- Supporting professional development.

- Promoting excellence in teaching and learning.

- Stimulating professional discourse.

2. Overview

IfL is committed to supporting the professional development of its members through the use of new and emerging technologies. REfLECT was launched in 2008 as a member benefit. It provides a secure online learning space that supports reflective practice and enables the sharing and recording of CPD.

3. Details

Approach

REfLECT offers a powerful and dynamic system for supporting individual and organisational professional development. It provides

- A range of interactive tools.

- Collaborative networks.

- Peer-to-peer support, review and feedback.

- Access to a wide range of resources.

- Mobile accessibility.

- An online submission process for professional formation and CPD.

Scale

Over 22,500 members are currently using REfLECT to record their CPD. In addition there are over 200 volunteers who are supporting their peers and colleagues in using REfLECT.

Impact

Evaluation findings identify that the following has been achieved

- Increased and more effective use of technology to support CPD.

- Increased participation rates at local and regional levels.

- Improvement in teaching, training and learning.

Other impacts include

- Streamlined systems for recording CPD.
- Integration with other programmes.
- Development of new professional development networks.
- Whole organisation involvement.

Costs and benefits

"REfLECT throughout the college will have environmental benefits in terms of saving paper. It is very easy to complete, amend and update. It's also extremely beneficial to be able to share assets with colleagues and managers, in a simple, quick and efficient way." (FE Director)

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

In order to achieve long term impact on professional practice, REfLECT needs to be

- Embedded in all national programmes.
- Supported by senior managers.
- Integrated within teacher training.

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Stimulating active learning with mobile and web 2.0 technologies

Lilian Soon (Independent Consultant) and
David Sugden (Independent Consultant)

1. The organisations

David Sugden is the proprietor of Village e-Learning Consultancy. David undertakes research, training and support in the use of e-learning throughout the UK education and private sectors.

Lilian Soon runs xlearn which provides e-learning services to businesses and the education sector. This includes materials development, texting solutions, training, project management, research and consultancy. In addition, xlearn aims to be a channel for inspiration in e-learning. By working with established partners in the sector, xlearn organises user group meetings and sharing good practice sessions.

Both Lilian and David have supported MoLeNET projects and Inclusivity projects (see below) and have a wealth of experience with mobile learning tools and techniques.

2. Overview

Lilian and David have run various training events for further education (FE) colleagues to illustrate the potential for mobile and Web 2.0 interventions in today's wider FE system. The sessions cover the use of a variety of mobile technologies and techniques, for example SMS texting, the extended use of mobile phones and a variety of Web 2.0 solutions.

Learning in the modern world takes place in a wide range of settings. We encourage our students to become lifelong learners and to instil skills that suit the changing times. Mobile phones are ubiquitous (84% of adults own a mobile phone) and Internet usage is on the increase. So, it is useful to consider the employment of these devices for learning.

Lilian and David's sessions illustrate how active learning can utilise the mobility of devices and/or device users to instigate deeper learning. They explore the use of SMS (the short message service) to employ LOTS and HOTS (Bloom's lower and higher order thinking skills) and mobile devices interacting with the Internet to provide exciting new opportunities for learner engagement. As a result, tutors have gone away with ideas to try out with their learners, and a change in the level of engagement with mobile devices is beginning to happen in the classroom and beyond.

3. Details

Approach

Some of the activities, ideas and web links that are used in the training sessions are detailed below:

SMS: the short message service (SMS) tends to be used primarily for administrative purposes in FE organisations. In a survey in 2008, only 10% of organisations that had two-way SMS used it for curriculum purposes. The following are just some ideas for use in curriculum that were explored during the conference session.

Task 1: Think of 30 things you can do with a mobile phone. Send some of these ideas to 07786 204949, starting your message with the letters hhl followed by a space (e.g. hhl listen to music). You can view the results by going to http://www.xlearn.co.uk/sms and logging in with hhl as the username and password.

Task 2: Evaluate the following quote in no more than 25 words (must be less than 160 characters) and text to 07786 204949 starting your text with vel. "Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten." (BF Skinner) The idea is to encourage higher order thinking by using the technique shown in this task.

Facts to consider:

- It doesn't cost anything to implement two-way texting. If you already having outgoing texts, you can usually receive incoming texts for free.

- If you even retain one student by using texting as one of your retention and achievement strategies, it can pay for the whole system.

Using the mobile phone as a recording device: With the mobile phone, you can now post text updates to websites via sms or via the Internet. You can also upload pictures and videos or stream videos to the web (qik.com). Shozu is a free application for most phones that allows you to send multiple pictures to multiple sites at once.

A possible activity would be to ask learners, in twos or threes, to create a photo story about health and safety using their mobile phones.

Related web sites to explore include:

http://www.jaiku.com http://www.twitter.com http://www.shozu.com http://www.moblog.net http://www.gabcast.com http://www.seesmic.com http://qik.com

Colleagues might reflect on what implications this may have for the building of e-portfolios, or for peer support.

Using the mobile phone as a learning device: As shown from the sms task above (30 things you can do with a mobile phone) learners can use their phones to help them become organised. The mobile phone also makes a great learning device if learners are encouraged to carry around podcasts or video clips for revision. Colleagues can carry out interactive exercises by asking those who can to label photos on the phone. A series of pictures can be turned into a jpeg quiz.

Sources of video clips for the phone and other portable media players include http://www.videojug.com and http://moletv.org.uk

Related videos (with no audio) can be found as follows:

a labelling exercise on the phone: http://tinyurl.com/d6wygk

a jpeg quiz on the phone: http://tinyurl.com/jpegquiz

how to make a jpeg quiz with nothing more than MS Paint: http://tinyurl.com/jpegquizhowto

Using QR codes: http://qrcode.kaywa.com and http://reader.kaywa.com Related activity ideas include to:

Design a lesson plan where staff ask the students to create a jpeg quiz; or

Design a lesson plan where staff use QR codes or ask the students to create QR codes for a revision activity.

Scale

The Mobile Learning Network (MoLeNET) is a unique collaborative approach to encouraging, supporting, expanding and promoting mobile learning, primarily in the English further education sector, via supported shared cost mobile learning projects. Now in its second year, MoLeNET is proving that mobile learning can increase engagement and provide learners with a real focus. Over 80 FE colleges have been involved in MoLeNET projects in the last two years. Ideas have been drawn from case studies for the inclusion of learners through mobile devices. These case studies have come about as a result of the learning for living and work projects in Yorkshire and Humber (http://inclusivity.rsc-yh.ac.uk) as well as from MoLeNET projects.

Impact

Mobile technologies, more than any other type of e-learning technology, have caused a leap forward in the adoption in the use of e-learning in colleges. Managers report being chased down the corridors by staff wanting to borrow and try out a 'gadget'. Teachers report learners being more engaged, showing more peer support in and outside the classroom, and being more motivated by the use of mobile technologies. We are beginning to see changes in the way lessons are prepared, with mobile devices becoming part of the mainstream teaching equipment used. Many organisations have had to rethink their teaching and learning strategies as well as their IT strategies, to include more wireless connectivity and to encompass policies relating to the use of learners' own devices and Web 2.0 sites. Learning resource centres help to manage the loan of devices and there has been a step change in the e-maturity of colleges who have been involved in the projects.

Costs and benefits

These projects have been funded by the LSC and the capital injection means that most colleges involved now have the infrastructure in place to continue their work. Replacement costs of mobile devices will always be an issue but, as the pedagogic model moves towards the use of learners' own devices, and the cost of data contracts fall, there is real scope for growth in the adoption of mobile technologies in teaching and learning.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

Web 2.0 sites can be here today and gone tomorrow. It is more important to adopt the concepts around the use of mobile and Web 2.0 technologies and to be adaptable, than it is to learn 'which buttons do what'. Colleges have had to devise policies quickly relating to inappropriate postings to public websites by learners. A new generation of learners, used to social networking, will be used to publishing everything on the web. If we don't tune in to their way of working and harness this energy, we miss out on engaging a whole generation.

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What can we learn from learners? A staff development toolkit for individuals and institutions

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1. The organisation

The JISC e-Learning programme funds the programme known as learners' experiences of e-learning as part of its research and development activities in supporting more effective use of technology in learning and teaching. The JISC support and synthesis project oversees seven research projects which are the second phase of learners' experiences of e-learning. The projects began in March 2007 and end in March 2009, with a synthesis report due out in May 2009.

2. Overview

A series of dissemination workshops are being offered in partnership with the JISC regional support centres, to provide synthesised findings from the programme along with adaptable, reusable workshop materials for delegates to use in their own staff development and internal dissemination events. These materials are designed to provoke discussion on the implications of the findings of the research for practitioners and policy makers and to provide guidance on conducting learner experience research. The conference workshop presented the key findings from this programme. Delegates were also introduced to the staff development toolkit which provides pathways through the wealth of resources synthesised from the programme.

3. Details

Approach

The workshops have been designed actively to engage participants from all post-16 backgrounds and institutional roles who come together to understand the way learners are using technology to support their learning. The materials are freely available to download and customise from the website (below) and the staff development toolkit works by mapping aims and audiences to resources in order to support individual staff development sessions. Feedback from workshops indicates a high take-up of the materials on offer.

Dissemination can be an active process and customisable to suit the context and needs of the group, institution or individuals.

Learners are very keen to tell us about their experiences of using technology as part of their learning, whether they are novice or confident users. Using a range of techniques to draw out their thoughts and feelings has been innovative and interesting. As more further education colleges take on research projects, the lessons we learned might be helpful for colleges wishing to apply for research funding with or without partners.

Scale

There were seven projects, covering approximately 200 learners, mainly in higher education (HE) but with some further education (FE) and adult and community learning (ACL) students. Questions asked included:

- How do specific groups of students experience learning with technology?

- What is the experience of highly skilled online communicators and networkers? How can learners' existing skills be developed and exploited more effectively?

- How do learners' experiences change through their learning journey, particularly at points of transition such as induction?

- What are the critical choices that learners make about when, where and how to study? How do these influence their experience of e-learning?

- How do learners make use of technology for learning in ways that are not expected or supported by their institution?

- How are learners personalising and adapting their learning tools and environments?

- How do students conceive of the role of technology in their learning? Is there a relationship between students' conceptions of learning with technology and their success?

- What, if any, is the impact of institutional strategies and course level practices (such as widening participation, developing skills for global citizenship, accessibility, designing for difference) on the learner experience?

Impact

One of the aims in the design of the active nature of the workshops was to ensure that all key people within an institution could have access to an activity which would help them to understand the implications of the learner experience of e-learning on their institution or department. Institutional managers need to understand, for example, that students who expect to use their own technologies (like access to Facebook) when they move to college or university might choose one place over another if one offers access and another does not.

Costs and benefits

The JISC support and synthesis team have worked hard to ensure that there is a wide range of resources and materials which are free to download. Work on a staff development toolkit is aimed at providing an easily customisable way to focus the use of the materials on an institution specific audience. A variety of interactive case studies of learners from different educational sectors is available as video clips on the web site. There is also an active online database of effective strategies using a range of technologies contributed by disabled learners. All outputs and resources will continue to be available under the Creative Commons licence.

These resources, along with the materials and activities on the website, should enable anyone to create a viable staff development session which aims to support a discussion on the learner experience of e-learning for several years to come.

4. Lessons, caveats, and implications

Listening to the learner voice from seven different projects has been a powerful experience for those involved. This research is intended to be cascaded to all post-16 institutions and the dissemination workshops have been aimed at HE, FE and ACL. Although the nature of each type of institution is different, by drawing us all together to discuss the changing nature of the learner experience and the implications for institutions, we are possibly moving closer to a unified e-learning experience.

Discussion, argument and occasional failure is better than sitting passively. Finding a way to listen and involve learners in our institutional practices and forward planning can help us evolve successfully in somewhat turbulent times.

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