

**Kindle Research** and **mc<sup>2</sup> research** recently collaborated to understand how the changing attitudes of UK secondary school teachers will affect awarding bodies, publishers and ICT providers.

## THE CONTEXT

### CHANGE, COMPLEXITY AND CONSOLIDATION.

Secondary schooling is an extraordinarily complex and diverse environment populated by an articulate, informed and passionate workforce that like agencies to recognise and acknowledge their situation. It's an exciting yet contradictory time - after years of continual change there is now some acceptance and consolidation.

- The endless plethora of initiatives, curricula and qualifications alongside another SATs change, the increasing use of technology, a looming shortage of head teachers and ever-increasing community responsibilities create an environment of opportunity and complexity. And all this is framed by a potential change of direction if there's a new Government in 2009/10
- However, there is considerable bedding down and consolidation too. Changes in working practices management and workforce structures are settling and most staff, particularly newer and younger ones, are coming to terms with the continual change.

### PERCEPTIONS OF TECHNOLOGY AND ITS EFFICACY ARE IMPROVING.

Increasingly, ICT is an integral part of the teaching and learning environment, not just in terms of penetration of the hardware. As teachers come to accept the potential of technologies to empower all areas of schools they anticipate its continuing integration on every level. Further, as ICT synchronises and integrates with new online resources and subscription services, most argue it has some fascinating implications:

- Enhanced and co-ordinated management and monitoring of staff, pupils, coursework, and curricula.

- Improved quality and consistency in coursework and exams marking.
- The imminent introduction of VLE's which is expected to accelerate these changes.

## ICT PROVIDERS ARE WELL PLACED

- **The scope for IT to become more fully integrated with their teaching is an exciting prospect.** Staff argue that the use of ICT in schools has improved teaching and learning and is set to increase. There is a strong sense that the initial learning process has finished and schools are set to consolidate and build on the systems they already have.

## IMPACT AND INTEGRATION

- **Online access is now critical to everyday practice.** Schools demand easy to use, stable systems with reliable and fast broadband internet and some will pay extra for services that ensure uninterrupted online access.
- **All agree how hard it is to alter a well embedded system without extensive preparation and support.** Any changes should support and integrate with their curricula, provide access to ready-made schemes of work, support individualised learning and enable better student support overall.
- **Despite the range of IT set-ups there is consistency in expectations of future developments.** Teachers argue that students will become increasingly more IT literate as the capacity of, and their access to, technology improves. ICT has the potential to better engage and involve students and a consequence could be a huge increase in the use of laptops in the more IT focussed schools

- **There is also a growing consensus that 'cloud' based or online systems may be the best way forward.** Current web-based online environments appear to best be able to robustly manage large numbers of users and that web 2.0 functionality is well suited to their needs. However, having the system configured correctly for their school, rather than a generic approach is often a priority.

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- **Providers must continue to support those schools that are not yet comfortable with the latest technological innovations.** Teachers are concerned that students' unequal access to technology and the internet will exacerbate and reinforce a divide in academic achievement.

### CHOOSING A SUPPLIER

- **Teachers still require as much IT support, financial aid and training as possible.** There is great variation in the technological set-up between schools and the spread of brands of hardware and software suppliers with few clear leaders in terms of brand or support offered.
- **Most schools accept that they do not utilise the technology they have to its full potential.** Across the board, current systems, particularly school networks, are still not regarded as either sufficiently easy to use or reliable. Moodle in

particular can face some harsh criticism while others feel its open source, low cost offering, international take-up, configurability and education focus goes some way to mitigating them.

- **Those schools managed by their LA are often in an ambivalent relationship.** They can be unhappy with the level of service they have received and yet pleased with the training opportunities. More proactive and technologically savvy staff prefer to choose from a broader range of suppliers than LA's offer. Schools in charge of their own purchasing, most commonly independent schools, tend to be most satisfied with their hardware, suppliers, software and service.

### VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (VLES)

- **Sophisticated and ambitious users already look forward to the potential benefits of VLEs.** While some way off, they foresee a fully integrated school learning environment, incorporating and improving upon everything that current systems do. All staff and pupils will have access to a central server where each student has an e-portfolio, remote access to schools' resources and where they can store home and coursework that can be reviewed and marked online. Even IT ambivalent staff accept that there are potentially huge benefits in terms of better pupil management and access to resources.

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