

Kindle Research recently conducted some research 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 a new Government is elected 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 VLEs which is expected to accelerate these changes.

A CHALLENGE FOR PUBLISHERS

- **Teachers anticipate a much more sophisticated relationship.** Text books are still an immensely important teaching resource for teachers. However, expectations are changing and staff are increasingly demanding and savvy about what they want from publishers with support material available as downloads complementing the immediacy of the hard copy format.

MORE INTEGRATION

- **Teachers hope publishers will do the important work of integrating their materials with schools' curricula and working practices.** Schools are an increasingly time pressurised, competitive and tightly managed environment and any attempt to take this into consideration is very well received.
- **Publishers should be leading the way in terms of providing comprehensive and curriculum-integrated teaching support on all levels.** Experience with awarding bodies and online resources more generally leads many to expect any materials to be well integrated with, and complemented by, publishers' websites.
- **A core demand is that the texts follow and dovetail with syllabuses, but not too closely.** Schools, especially those with high quality intake and in particular independents, try not to teach too closely to the spec and encourage independent research and learning

- **Any recommendations from awarding bodies are closely looked at.** There is also the expectation that as the integration of technology with schools continues, the relationship between awarding bodies and publishers will necessarily become closer. Some hope this will allow the provision of bespoke learning materials that can be tailored to integrate with a particular scheme of work and even for different types of learner.
- **Teachers are also clear about the service they want with publishers.** Swiftiness of response to enquiries, flexibility over invoicing and some reward for loyalty can be determining criteria in their choice.
- **Timing of publishing is important.** It needs to take into account reviewing and consultation time so that schools can be certain materials are correct for them whilst still being recent enough to feel up to the moment.
- **Many teachers argue that it is becoming easier to do without specific course materials from publishers altogether.** The range and quality of free websites such as teachit, activehistory and the burgeoning collection of subscription based online resources, supported by the services and materials being made available by awarding bodies suggests alternative options to traditional provision of course materials are needed.

MODERN, HELPFUL MATERIALS

- **Teachers are particularly aware of the impact good quality materials can make on their teaching and the engagement of students.** Ideally all books would be well organised and modern looking with current imagery, interesting facts and a layout which makes them as user friendly as possible. Teachers most appreciate materials that are accompanied by guides that include hints on delivery, i.e. how to teach to split years. And naturally, teachers expect publishers to provide progressively better multimedia resources.

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (VLES)

- **The imminent introduction of VLEs may facilitate a more bespoke and tailored approach to the provision of learning materials.** Schools and staff are especially sensitive to the considerable cost implications of new purchases and integrating new materials with old, so they carefully balance these against staying up-to-date and enthusing and educating their students. This understanding is exacerbated by awareness of how suddenly curricula and teaching styles can change. There is growing optimism that VLEs may represent the most cost effective route through these competing demands.

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