

Zoe Ross's Development Work **Developing teachers as innovative users of ICT** at Presdales School, Ware

Zoe Ross had a role of responsibility in her school. She was the 'ICT Strategy Manager'. To develop the use of ICT in the school she needed to challenge teachers' perceptions of the potential of ICT to support learning and teaching and their perceptions of their own levels of competence in using ICT.

Zoe was convinced that ICT has massive potential to promote students' engagement and motivation and she found plenty of support for this optimistic view in the literature (e.g. BECTA, 2007). Innovative ICT practices such as utilising social networking sites, blogs and games could encourage students to become more active, independent learners (McClellan, 2005). The ICT infrastructure in Zoe's school was improving rapidly but there was a danger that the teachers' practice would remain static due to their own lack of confidence and capability. The new hardware might remain unused. During one of the Teacher Led Development Work sessions at Zoe's school, colleagues were encouraged to consider the barriers and enablers to progress within the school's culture. Zoe wondered how cultural change in relation to ICT could be achieved. The introduction of innovative ICT practices would need teachers to act as 'agents of disruption' (Law, 2007). Zoe needed to enlist the help of a number of people who shared her desire for change to disrupt the status quo and develop a collaborative way forward.

Zoe began by organising a training session for all staff, designed to develop their ICT capability. During this session some colleagues were very modest about their own abilities but, with support from more experienced colleagues, achieved more than they expected. She decided to try to develop this model of peer support. She invited a number of teachers who had already developed some innovative ICT practices to work with her. Two teachers agreed to collaborate with Zoe to develop the use of blogs for exam revision and a software programme called 'Yacapaca' which enables teachers to

“create, share, set, mark and analyse assessments for free” (<http://yacapaca.com>).

Blogging and using webpages to publish text, images and video clips have been growing in popularity with teachers, perhaps because of their students’ enthusiasm for these technologies (Blane, 2008). One of Zoe’s collaborators developed the use of a blog to help his Year 11 and 12 students to revise for tests. After the blog had been in use for some time, Zoe interviewed these students and others who had been using similar resources. She found that they were enthusiastic about this technology. Some students felt they achieved better using Yacapaca because they felt less stressed than in ordinary assessments. Students are also given formative feedback through using this system which they found helpful in moving forward. Having been convinced of the value of these ICT innovations, Zoe wanted to develop ways of enabling other staff to make use of them.

Zoe reflected on strategies she had used in the past to develop teachers’ ICT expertise. These had been successful to some extent but she wanted to try something different, something more in keeping with the innovative practices she was trying to promote. A conversation with her students in which they praised the video tutorials which Zoe had produced for them showed a possible way forward.

They’re brilliant – you can use them when it suits you – at home or school – and you can go over them again and again if you need to.. they are far easier to understand than notes or books.

Video tutorials are highly visual, usually feature a narrative and have an interactive dimension which allows learners to progress at their own pace and to exercise control over the medium of learning. Zoe wondered if this could be of benefit to teachers who wanted to develop their ICT skills. Zoe and her collaborators produced a video tutorial using screen-recording software to introduce other teachers to Yacapaca. The video tutorial gives step-by-step instructions on how to access Yacapaca and how it can be used effectively. Viewers are guided through what they would see on their own computer through a presentation of the screen they would see with the addition of text box instructions.

The reaction of teachers to the tutorial was mixed. Some teachers were very positive whereas others felt they did not have the time to

devote to learning new skills, even if presented in this user-friendly way. Although Zoe was initially disheartened by this response, discussions in her TLDW group and in the staffroom made her realise that there would be no 'quick' fix' – this was a long term project. There is a genuine concern over the amount of time it takes to learn new skills and there is no doubt that computer-based learning should not be seen as a substitute for student-teacher interaction (Sinclair, 2002). Zoe remains convinced that there is a definite place for ICT in schools and will continue to collaborate with colleagues in all departments to develop innovative practices and to influence the process of cultural change in ICT.

References

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