

ONLINE SYSTEMS TO HELP SCHOOLS WITH SELF REVIEW

Gazette Focus looks at the continued importance of school review and development with ongoing changes in the use of ICT in the classroom.

When the choice of technology is driven by the needs of the learners, ICT has the potential to transform learning and teaching. However, this does not just happen. The introduction and implementation of ICT needs to be thoughtfully considered and strategically planned for, executed and consistently reviewed.

In schools where ICT is making a significant difference to learning and achievement, they have undertaken a comprehensive process of self review and strategic planning. These schools have a clear and shared understanding of their educative purpose, their vision, values, and beliefs about learning. These are highly visible and enacted as the school operates as a learning organisation, modelling a learning culture where learning programmes are personalised and specifically designed to meet the needs of learners.

These schools know their people, and place learners at the centre of learning. In some cases, these schools have:

- » Debated and explored ‘what is powerful to learn?’ and ‘what is powerful learning?’.
- » Invested time to develop learning, thinking and teaching strategies to align and reflect this in their learning programmes.
- » Developed assessment and reporting processes to assist learners with learning.
- » Explored the possibilities of ICT to assist learners with their learning in accessing information, creating new knowledge, sharing, collaborating, and communicating.
- » Have identified the best options available to meet the needs of their learners.
- » Provided their teachers with the professional learning and support to ensure that ICT will be used in a way that will enhance learning and achievement.
- » Worked to develop a culture of learning that recognises and values open-mindedness, informed risk taking, communication, collaboration, and critical reflection.
- » Examined the necessary organisational, technical, and physical infrastructure required to ensure that ICT can be used discerningly and integrated seamlessly into learning programmes.

While this sounds like a logical learning process, the reality can pose considerable challenges to educational leaders. Questions that arise from this process can include thoughts around ensuring that there is a process to review current reality and guide future development. Schools also focus on placing a ‘lens on learning’ to examine their school as a learning organisation to ascertain what they really do.

Part of this process includes looking at:

- » A shared understanding and awareness of a school’s educative purpose, vision, values and belief around learning.
- » Enacting their educative purpose, vision and values, and using these to guide and direct decision making.
- » Walking the talk of their shared beliefs and understandings about learning to guide the seamless integration of ICT.
- » Walking the talk of theory in practice.
- » Having the technical and physical infrastructure to support 21st century learning.
- » Valuing and cultivating reflection, collaboration, open-mindedness, communication, and informed risk-taking to promote 21st century learning.
- » Critically reflecting on the impact of ICT on learning and achievement.
- » Critically reflecting on the school’s overall learning and performance.

An online Education Positioning System (EPS) has been developed to offer a comprehensive

framework for formative school self review. Developed by CORE Education in conjunction with Dr Julia Atkin, creation of the EPS was made possible following extensive research in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia. It focuses on 18 key elements that are fundamental to future school growth and development.

The framework, combined with an online data gathering tool and facilitation support, enables schools to identify their ‘current reality’ and assess where they are in relation to the educational landscape. The online survey provides an anonymous method for capturing the perceptions and voice of the school community, enabling schools access to appropriate data.

The survey results can be used interactively to explore data, next steps, and at a later stage, to provide evidence of where progress has been made. An analytical report, both online and in print, identifies relative strengths and areas for development, providing a sound basis for strategic planning and future development. ■

