

Kindle Research and **mc² 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 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 ongoing adoption of electronic tools and resources which are expected to accelerate these changes.

POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR AWARDING BODIES

- **Awarding bodies are understood to be unequivocally at the core of what schools offer and to shape the structure of other systems within them.** Teachers accept government is largely responsible for determining core curriculum content and structure but also feel that there is much that the awarding bodies could do to make their lives easier. Once curricula and systems are in place they quickly become part of a school's culture.

SUPPORTING INTEGRATION

- **Awarding bodies should engage with teachers and be seen to be at the forefront of supporting integration with the school environment.** There is a strong expectation that the relationship with, and the services provided by, awarding bodies will increasingly move in the direction of electronic and online services. Awarding bodies need to make the integration of their curricula into the pressurised school environment as easy as possible without appearing to interfere or dominate. Where schools are planning to introduce a change of course within a short time scale, i.e. a single academic year, being able to react swiftly and relevantly can create additional loyalty to an Awarding Body's products.

- **Awarding bodies are in a great position to improve their position in schools through web-based relationship management systems,** engaging staff in a dialogue and ensuring their curricula integrate with the school IT environment and teachers' needs.

BUILDING A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP

- **The ongoing importance of exams results and league tables means teachers are keen to develop their relationship with the awarding bodies.** A large part of what informs teachers' sense of achievement is how successful they are at getting the best from their pupils. Teachers openly confess that competitive pressures result in a results-driven 'race to the bottom' and that over time the most popular awarding bodies will be those whose qualifications their students do best at. Although some schools are willing to choose more difficult qualifications that suit their brighter pupils.
- **Awarding bodies should be as transparent and open as possible about marking, percentages and how they understand and inform exams.** The availability of examiner's reports is appealing and appreciated. A board's success is largely informed by how well teachers understand the criteria used to mark the exams and how well awarding bodies communicate and adhere to them. Teachers are therefore keen to have as much of a relationship

and with as many supporting resources as possible, including access to past papers and in-depth marking schemes.

CHOOSING AN AWARDING BODY

- **Choice of awarding bodies is affected by how well it integrates with a school and a teacher's success with it.** Flexibility, in terms of choice of content and the extent to which they can construct and guide their pupils through it, detailed specification content and exam demands are paramount. Teachers are also keen to see overlap with existing resources.
- **Teachers feel valued when the awarding bodies are seen to engage with them and take on board their concerns.** The quality, range and consistency of support are increasingly important.
- **The predictability and clarity of exams, the quality of examiners, their training and consistency of marking are crucial.** There is a lot of discussion and informal feedback between teachers about the various awarding bodies.
- **More than ever teachers are also looking for relevant, challenging, interesting and engaging subject matter.** Teachers argue the ideal is a well supported modular curriculum which allows schools to choose their own pathway and content to suit their pupils.

Kindle Research is dedicated to understanding people, technology and communications and specialises in the education sector. We use the full range of research methodologies to achieve maximum value and insight for clients such as Elsevier, OCR, Teachers TV and the DCSF. For more information, please see www.kindleresearch.com or call **PAUL HUTCHINGS** on **01273 770095**.

mc² research specialises in delivering full service, value added qualitative and quantitative research in the education sector for clients including OCR, University of Westminster, Local Authorities and the Heritage sector, including public and privately funded museums and galleries. For more information please visit www.mc2marketresearch.co.uk or talk to **HUGH MCCORMACK** direct on **0115 914 2887**.