

Kindle Research and **mc² research** recently collaborated to understand how the changing attitudes of UK secondary school teachers will affect awarding bodies (ABs), publishers and ICT providers.

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 new technology, and particularly Virtual Learning Environments, which is expected to accelerate these changes.

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROVIDERS WHO CAN OFFER AND INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

- The use of ICT in schools has improved teaching and learning, the initial learning process has finished and schools are set to consolidate and build on the systems they already have.
- Students will become increasingly IT literate and most agree that ICT has the potential to better engage and involve them.
- There is a strong expectation ABs and Publishers will offer increasingly integrated electronic and online services.
- Teachers feel that there is much that could be done to make their lives easier. Service providers should support and integrate with curricula, provide access to ready-made schemes of work, support individualised learning and enable better student support overall.

MANY LOOK FORWARD TO FULLY INTEGRATED AND EASY TO USE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- VLEs are expected to deliver significant benefits. There is a growing consensus that in the long term 'cloud-based' or online services will best be able to robustly manage large numbers of different users. However, any system should be configured specifically for their school.

TEACHERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE, EASE OF USE, ACCESS AND RELIABILITY OF IT

- There is great variation in technological set-up within schools and no clear leaders in terms of brand or support offered. Schools managed by their LA are often deeply ambivalent about the level of service they receive but most pleased with training opportunities.
- Current systems are difficult to use or unreliable. Moodle can face harsh criticism but many feel its open source, low cost, international take-up, configurability and education focus goes some way to mitigating criticisms.
- There is concern that unequal access amongst students to technology and the internet may exacerbate current divisions in academic achievement. Support for schools not yet secure with the latest technological innovations should continue.
- Schools demand solid, stable systems with reliable and fast broadband internet access and some pay extra to ensure uninterrupted online access.

CHOICE OF AB WILL HINGE ON HOW WELL IT INTEGRATES WITH A SCHOOL AND FLEXIBILITY OVER CONTENT

- Key to any AB's success is teachers' comprehension of marking criteria and that the board communicates and adheres to them. Consequently quality, range and consistency of

support are ever more important. All are keen to have as much of a relationship and as many supporting resources as possible. The ideal is a well supported modular curriculum which allows schools to choose their own pathway and content to suit their pupils.

- Teachers believe that competitive pressures will lead to a results driven 'race to the bottom' but the most popular exam boards will be those their students do best at.

PUBLISHERS FACE A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE

- Text books will remain essential classroom resources for the foreseeable future, however publishers should lead the way in providing comprehensive and curriculum-integrated teaching support. Ideally the future will allow for the generation of bespoke learning materials that integrate with specific schemes of work and are even altered for different learners.
- Teachers emphasise the impact good quality materials can make on their teaching. Materials should be well organised, modern looking with recent images, interesting facts and as user friendly a layout as possible. Teachers especially value materials accompanied by guides with hints on delivery.
- The increasing range and quality of free websites and subscription based online resources are encouraging the uptake of alternative options to the traditional provision of course materials but teachers argue that publishers are well placed to engage in this.

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