Case study 4b: An ICT quality system to support learning

David Turrell, The Sir Bernard Lovell School, UK

Summary of the case study

The Sir Bernard Lovell School has developed a systematic approach to quality assurance in e-learning. This is a response to the considerable growth using advanced technologies. The quality assurance framework has identified four strands for its work: technology, curriculum, learner and verification. These strands assist the institution to take on a client focus. The emphasis is on ensuring a consistent high quality service 24/7. This requires high levels of trust as we ask teachers to try different pedagogical approaches using more and more advanced technologies. These approaches increase emphasis and learning as a strategy for improved educational standards and the encouragement of more self-direct learners.

Description of context

The Sir Bernard Lovell Language College is an 11-18 years mixed comprehensive of 1 300 students and 157 staff. The school is on the edge of Bristol in the United Kingdom. It has a strong commitment to using e-technology in learning. Over the past two years, it has invested in substantially upgrading its computer infrastructure. The school has a powerful central system, wireless and cabled infrastructure and over 500 computers. ICT is taught in every year to all students and is very extensively used across all subjects. Some 80% of classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards. All staff have laptop computers. The school has 70% PC, 30% Apple technology. These Macintosh machines are serviced by four technicians. The school has developed and customised an e-learning platform which is available to all students and staff, and will, in the future, be available to all parents. This scale and use of provision has now necessitated the development of an extensive quality assurance process.

What we need to do and why we did it

The scale of provision has meant that it has been very important to us that we were able to develop a quality assurance system which was co-terminus with the school self-evaluation process. We were aware that if we did not develop a system which involved all users, we would not be

able to deliver a high standard of education to all of our students. Additionally, e-learning is used as a catalyst for progressive pedagogical change. If the system fails to work effectively, standards will not be reached, students will be demotivated and the pace of change will be inhibited.

Main purpose

To develop a quality assurance system that ensures high quality e-learning experiences for all students and staff.

Action taken

All members of the school's Senior Leadership Group were inducted into a whole school Quality Assurance Framework. The framework, which forms the basis of a whole-school system of self-evaluation and quality assurance, will ensure that our e-learning quality assurance systems become an integral part of the organisation's overall quality assurance process.

The e-learning system of quality assurance is based upon the following framework:

■ quality assurance rationale;

■ the technology strand;

■ the curriculum strand;

■ the learner strand;

■ the verification strand.

The quality assurance system will:

■ maintain a focus on learners as our main clients;

■ be transparent;

■ have clear criteria for quality;

■ be refined over time;

■ gather evidence for improvement from a range of sources;

■ have clear expectations of quality and leadership;

■ address the need of all clients;

■ use processes that ensure all user engagement.

Main outcomes

1. The system provides a high quality service 24/7.

2. High level of user trust.

3. Significant impact on educational standards.

Main conclusions

The singular purpose of the school is to educate students to a high standard and to prepare them for an active adult life. The whole-school Quality Assurance Framework is providing us with a system which can be used in different contexts within the organisation. Its implementation will ensure a higher quality service in a complex e-learning environment, helping us to manage pedagogical change.