An Evaluation of the ICT Register

for the Department for Education and Skills

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Core Education UK

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Contents

Executive Summary

This is an evaluation of the ICT Register carried out from December 2006 to March 2007 by Core Education UK. The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust [SSAT] has developed the ICT Register as a website and associated database to share expertise in ICT from leading, Registered Schools.

Crucially this is underpinned with face-to-face meetings, network support and conference activities to develop expertise in ICT in Education in the school sector.

The evaluation was carried out through recorded and transcribed telephone and face-to-face interviews, gathering of quantitative data, attendance at ICT Register events and analysis of transcripts, observations and the data.

The evaluators found the ICT Register to offer very good value for money with clear evidence of positive impact on schools and individuals. It was also clear that there is potential for further significant benefits subject to funding and commitment to the vision.

The combination of features incorporated in the website and related activities is unique.

A key feature is that the activities are practitioner driven and are supported by sensitive and thoughtful encouragement and monitoring. The ICT Register team are keen to ensure the ICT Register employs appropriate technologies and that new or improved elements are included when and where appropriate. The team rightly pride themselves on listening carefully to suggestions from the practitioners. The responses are prompt yet carefully considered.

The practitioners are empowered by the structure and feel a sense of ownership. Their enthusiasm and professional altruism create a dynamic atmosphere rather than that of a library with an ambience of silent contemplation.

The ICT Register is clearly by practitioners for practitioners. Every respondent recognised its value – and none could suggest an alternative that provides all the different components.

The practitioners are generating new knowledge. They recognised that the ICT Register was impacting positively on them and their schools. The evaluators believe that with further support, the ICT Register offers a mechanism to achieve cultural change in the use of ICT in education.

The opportunity for any practitioner, whether teacher or support staff, to investigate an area of interest and then interrogate an 'expert' practitioner to gain further insight and tacit knowledge is a key feature. This feature is fundamental to effecting change.

Respondents recognise the Register as a powerful tool for continuing professional development. They value the commitment and dedication of the Register team.

The activities which supplement and support the Register serve to highlight best practice, encourage research and innovation and support national initiatives.

The ICT Register network is well organised and well supported. The blending of online activity and local and national face to face activity enhances and underpins the website. It should be emphasised that the website portrays only a small part of the overall activity and benefits of the ICT Register.

The network of ICT Register Schools offers an opportunity for testing and trialling ICT hardware software and technological based pedagogies. This is exploited by the test bedding activities. Some formal research has been initiated and there is a significant opportunity for supplementing the reporting of activities with an action-based approach.

The ICT Register website has evolved considerably since its inception and continues to do so. The user interface is straightforward and easily navigated. The evaluators feel the ICT Register could be further promoted, improving its presence on the SSAT website in relation to other initiatives that are given greater prominence. The evaluators note that the ICT Register team are also responsible for a range of other activities and meetings associated with ICT Register but these are not immediately apparent. They include three conferences a year with the focus schools, which include primary and secondary representatives. In addition the team make regular meetings with BESA, DfES, Partnership for Schools, Becta and partnership projects with ICT companies developing new initiatives and software trials.

The evaluators consider that the impact on user schools has been positive, providing timely advice which is trusted and, when contrasted with other forms of CPD or development activity, gives very good value for money.

The impact on ICT Register Schools has been positive, partly by converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and also in the development of those schools providing access and partnership with a network of other schools leading the field.

Again this has provided good value for money when contrasted with existing development and CPD.

> "I finish my presentations with a slide showing a wheel, I say that I have a wheel that turns for me and if you can take it, change a few spokes and make it turn for you, then please do so. I think this is what the ICT Register helps you to do. . . ."

Introduction

The ICT Register provides a website, a network and a range of services which are available to all schools. A key purpose is to enable practitioners to access advice and information about all aspects of educational technology from Register Schools with specific areas of expertise.

The project has been successfully implemented in the primary, secondary and special school sectors and has recently expanded to include approved Early Years Settings and City Learning Centres.

Schools can apply for Register status by downloading application forms from the website. Schools need to be able to offer generic expertise [as outlined in the application form] and services in two further categories [a further four categories, if the school is applying for a Focus school role]. Applications are viewed by members of the ICT Register team and Register consultants to confirm that the school has reached the necessary standard to offer advice and support to other schools. Currently over 2,000 different services are offered by the 469 Register Providers. **Please not that the term Register Schools is used throughout this** report and this term includes other providers such as CLCs and those in Early Years settings. In each of eleven regions there are two focus schools, a primary and secondary, which organise a minimum of one meeting a year in their region with the Registered Schools in their sector, funding for this facilitation role is available for the focus school. In addition, one Special school and one CLC have taken on a national Focus role for these institutions.

The ICT Register Team includes three members who work for the Register full-time and three who work part-time for the Register but whose other work for the Trust includes initiatives which relate to and impact on the ICT Register:

- Register Project Director (part-time), who has been responsible for the concept of the Register since the pilot stage and who is concerned with the strategic direction and development of the Register. He is an Associate Director of the SSAT.
- Head of ICT Development for SSAT (part-time) who is responsible for the Register budget within SSAT and who strategically links the Register with other ICT projects and initiatives within the Trust and nationally.
- Register Project Manager Operational (part-time) who line manages the members of the central team. Her SSAT full-time post includes extensive CPD and ICT Development programmes, which enable her to take an overview of the Register and its relationship to these.
- Register Project Manager Website (full-time) has been responsible for creating, developing and maintaining the Register website and the extensive database of support services. He ensures that reliable quality assurance mechanisms form an integral part of the website.
- Development Officer (full-time) liaises extensively with Register schools in the development of test-bedding projects with the software industry and the National Strategies. She organizes the annual Register Showcase and relevant publicity materials.
- Administrator (full-time) who is responsible for ensuring the day-to-day running of the Register,

responding to enquiries, contacts with Register schools, recruiting new schools and administrative support for the Register Team.

The ICT Register has been developed as an SSAT initiative, grant aided by the DfES. Initially the East Midlands pilot was fully funded by the SSAT. Since its national rollout the DfES grants for the development of the Register have been as follows:

2004/5 £125,000

2005/6 £340,000

2006/7 £255,000

The SSAT has sought and continues to seek sponsorship for the maintenance and development of the ICT Register. During 2006-7 the Register received sponsorship funding in the form of test-bedding projects for the software industry in Register schools which were approved by the DfES, and from exhibitors at the annual Showcase.

When the ICT Register initiative was launched in November 2003, as a pilot project in the East Midlands, there were 20 secondary and 10 primary schools with the current web programmer employed as an external consultant and a project manager. At the national launch in November 2004 there were 209 Registered schools, 30 of which were primary and the remainder secondary. The website and its associated database has since expanded and currently there are 469 Registered schools from all sectors including 24 special schools, 22 City Learning Centres and 6 international Schools.

Use of the ICT Register is free of charge. Any school can make an enquiry through the Register or pose a direct question to Register schools via the 'Ask the Schools' feature. Only Register providers can respond to those enquiries.

The ICT Register appoints Focus Schools to coordinate the work of schools in the regions. They are able to communicate with each other nationally using the facilities provided by the website, either by communicating individually or by responding to queries. If a question is asked using the 'Ask the Schools' facility then the question is sent via e mail, to those schools that have opted into the system. If they are able to offer help then they can do so directly, or if not then the mail can be deleted. The system is moderated so only genuine questions will be sent to register schools.

The ICT Register also organises a series of face-to-face meetings for Focus Schools where participants meet and share ideas and can hear about recent developments in the use of ICT.

Aim

This evaluation determines how effectively the programme is meeting schools' needs and whether there are areas which can be developed. The statistics collected via the website give no indication of the quality of service or customer satisfaction so an approach based on participants' views has been taken.

Purpose

This evaluation provides a qualitative and quantitative insight into these areas, using the Terms of Reference below as a focus. It will be used to influence decisions on future developments and funding. Similar services across the country were compared and the experiences of Register schools and user schools in different areas were sought.

Terms of Reference

An independent evaluation of the ICT Register should seek to establish:

1. impact and value for money in User Schools;

2. impact and value for money in Register Schools;

3. the ease of use of the website resource.

Methodology

The overarching methodology was qualitative in approach, based on interviews with participants and stakeholders. This led to identification of key issues based on their responses.

Interviews were carried out by pre-arranged telephone calls with key school staff in institutions familiar with the ICT Register, using a structured questionnaire. The interviews, which lasted between 30 minutes and an hour, were recorded for transcription later. The interviewers familiarised themselves with the ICT Register and were briefed on its background prior to the interviews. Points raised in the interviews led to additional interviews with two local authority officials.

The transcripts were then compiled, analysed and quotes were selected which illustrate recurring themes - these are presented in this report alongside the themes.

A total of 38 respondents were contacted for interviews in the period February - March 2007. They were widely distributed across the country, included headteachers, CLC staff, ICT Register staff, teachers, ICT coordinators, network managers and local authority staff.

Quantitative data in the form of website activity was provided by the ICT Register Team. Some quantitative data was gathered during the interviews and focused on features of the website and the impact of the ICT Register.

Events attended included the ICT Register Showcase and a Focus schools meeting. These events were observed and notes taken for this report.

Findings

This section offers an overview of our findings with quotes and commentary which serve to illustrate the conclusions.

The respondents involved with the ICT Register since its inception, noted that its nature has developed over time from an emphasis on technology and hardware support to a focus on the role of technology in developing pedagogy. This change was welcomed. All respondents, from user Schools, Register Schools and local authority staff expressed support for the ICT Register and the related activities. Most could be characterised as enthusiasts.

F1-F5: The ICT Register enables Continuing Professional Development to occur in situ

Impact on staff development offered by the ICT Register has been substantial. Notably the Register encourages and enables the sharing of tacit as well as explicit knowledge. The sharing of tacit knowledge is generally recognised as crucial but challenging to achieve. Research has shown that ongoing access to information interspersed with periods of reflection is important for building staff confidence in their use of ICT and thus in effecting real change.

F1 Respondents already recognise the ICT Register as a powerful tool for continuing professional development.

> "I am actually in the process of formalising ICT related staff development particularly for my technical staff. I see it (the ICT Register) as very good way of fulfilling staff development."

> "I look into ways that we do something we all win from so I will say: 'Look this school in ******** seems to do this. Why don't we put that as something you can work to build-on which can be a target for professional development?' It can then be met in a much more open and exciting way and real links are developing rather than putting them through a 'course'. It's honing their skills as well as helping our school."

> "I think that (CPD) is what it's beginning to grow into because it originally started as services. It's growing into something bigger really."

> "It's actually bringing together everything…it's taken on the role of CPD professional development online…. It's the start of a really useful tool…It should be seen as part and parcel of the core scene of developing new technology in schools…"

> "We had an enquiry from a different region which led to a visit and trading of training."

The issue of rewarding those who create and share knowledge was raised in interviews and one response was:

> "Rewarding individuals and giving it some form of CPD which is recognised for higher level qualifications is an absolutely brilliant idea."

F2 The ICT Register model supports the notion of networked learning communities and viral dissemination of information including a global perspective.

These are examples of how the ICT Register has acted as a catalyst for further networking. The Register may no longer be directly supporting the contacts in some cases but it can act as a focus and means to record new knowledge and outcomes.

The following are examples of knowledge gained from international contacts which is then made available through the ICT Register.

> "Probably fifteen of our staff have been to Australia and New Zealand and not just senior management but NQTs. Two teachers went to San Francisco one of them was on a one year contract. I've been to Boston, Adelaide, sent people to Atlanta, Singapore even sent two teachers to Australia for two weeks all expenses paid. It brings huge dividends. We are building a new school and 70% of the curriculum will be based on enquiry based learning and it's only by getting out to see the rest of the world and seeing that actual happen and proving that it works that we have the knowledge

and confidence to make a decision like that."

"Through the software trials and the Futures Vision tour, that's where I got some inspiration. That fed into the work we do in the CLC which fed into the schools."

"As a Registered school, the links to commercial organisations and researching the tools for them has lead to benefits and links to an Australian organisation. It is the other bits of research linking to an international dimension that you probably don't come

> "Teachers will not take up attractive sounding ideas, albeit based on extensive research, if these are presented as general principles which leave entirely to them the task of translating them into everyday practice – their classroom lives are too busy and too fragile for this to be possible for all but an outstanding few.
>
> What they need is a variety of living examples of implementation, by teachers with whom they can identify and from whom they can both derive conviction and confidence that they can do better, and see concrete examples of what doing better means in practice"
>
> **Black and Wiliam, 1998**

across anywhere else."

"The ICT Register works very well at putting human beings in touch with each other but once they are the human contact side of them takes over and they build relationships under the umbrella of the register which can then operate semi-independently of the parent."

F3 Users value the ability to 'pull' or draw-down information on a 'just in time' basis

> "What's good about the ICT Register is that it's anytime and anywhere, it's really good for teachers."
>
> "I like the way you send a message to someone and they get back very quickly. It's prompt help that you want, isn't it?"

F4 The ICT Register structure offers distinctive opportunities for research.

The activities, case studies, trials and opinions are usually recorded without reference to previous research nor do they attempt to analyse the cost versus benefits or impact. Those using these resources are highly educated professionals and capable of asking the appropriate questions before adopting a feature or approach. It was apparent in our interviews that those

practitioners offering advice were mindful of the need to objectively declare challenges and caveats as well as the successes. It may be appropriate to consider how ICT Register resources and advice could conform to an accepted research methodology. This may be helpful for marketing of services outside the UK and as extra assurance for those in the UK.

There is an opportunity for Register schools to contribute knowledge and this comment suggests there is a rich vein of knowledge to be mined. The challenge is to make the process easy and rewarding.

> "One of my AST projects eighteen months ago was into tablet PCs, notebook laptops and palmtops. A lot of work which I wrote up like a case study afterwards for teaching primary school children: these are the benefits; these are ideas for doing it. That's still sat on my desk - a couple of schools said they were thinking about it so I offered it as a factual, non-judgmental report with some opinion at the end where I have come down on one side."

F5 The SSAT supplements direct funding of the ICT Register by exploiting SSAT networks and activities.

Applications to join the ICT Register are viewed by SSAT consultants in the regions after consideration by ICT Register staff. This process confirms that the applicant school has reached the necessary standard to offer advice and support to other schools.

The SSAT is in effect subsidising the ICT Register in this activity.

F6–F9: The ICT Register is by practitioners and for practitioners

F6 The Register is practitioner driven.

The respondents see this as an important strength.

> "Practical advice from those who have experience."

> "It's done by teachers for teachers."

> "Essentially it's about practitioners."

> "What the Register offers is information from those people who have been there and done it,"

> "..the fact that it's for teachers and by teachers gives it a real credibility."

> "Really good quality assurance process."

F7 The ICT Register facility is dynamic.

The practitioner knowledge base ensures that information is relevant and constantly updated without apparent external commissioning or intervention.

The interface between the practitioner seeking information and the practitioner providing it is minimal and supportive rather than bureaucratic and inhibiting.

> "The 'Ask the School' email, when someone has requested information is useful as when it turns up in your e mail, it reminds you of the site and allows you to delete any you can't answer. There was some discussion about PDAs and Tablets, I had been at BETT and was thinking along the same lines so the discussion allowed me to see what others were thinking about a change I was considering. I think this is brilliant . . ."

F8 The Register Schools offer a distributed network of expertise which can grow organically to meet demand.

> "Only 11-15% of schools are e-mature"
> – Robin Ball, Becta

This suggests the full extent of the demand for this service is yet to be manifested.

F9 The respondents displayed a sense of ownership in the ICT Register.

They were very willing to comment and offer positive suggestions

> "News item section could be beefed up, to see all the details of the regional meetings on there."

> "The ability to tag things would be useful."

> "ScreenCasts online had a video podcast about it which took you through the software in five minutes. Just by watching that video podcast I thought that's it; seeing really short videos of not more than five minutes. I haven't got that much time. You get more sometimes from a video than reading a case study or a bit of text."

> "Discussion forums with live feedback …Hotseats may be useful… Feedback on particular ideas."

> "The email system is working far better. It could start-off other people looking at it. If someone had posted a message about modern languages (recent topic) then I would have passed it on to the head of ML who would never in a million years look on the ICT Register. That would start them off. This opportunity to pass things on to those who wouldn't look is very positive."

> "Maybe we should offer free online learning – so, if you want to learn to use, say, a whiteboard, then the course would be available on the Register. A by-product of that would be more visitors and lots of folk are doing training and that could be advertised on the Register too."

These comments also indicate that the website is viewed as the visible focus of the ICT Register activity.

F10: The ICT Register Website

F10 The website provides a range of resources in support of the information dissemination process.

> These include RSS and the Ask the Schools – 'Quick Questions' – a feature seen as particularly useful.

> "Ask a question when you see everyone's answer you get an overview of the issue. A powerful feature."

The feature was welcomed for a number of reasons. The emails generated prompt the registered schools to visit the website and they provide an overview of current issues and responses even if they do not respond personally.

> "We all need nudging that's for sure."

> "What isn't available is the email address of individuals in the schools, a mechanism for making contact through a mediator. I try to feed external contacts back through the Register."

This section states that the service is open to all. But the evaluators feel that this openness could be made clearer by wider use of the statement used in this section:

> "Please note that this facility is open to non-Register schools - you do not need to be a participant in the project in order to pose a question."

"Quick Questions" for Register Schools

Welcome to the ICT Register 'Quick Questions' section.
You may send a question to us, and we will forward it to some ICT Register schools who will hopefully be able to provide you with a quick answer!
Please note that this facility is open to non-Register schools - you do not need to be a participant in the project in order to pose a question.

Post a new question

Some recent questions:

Question: Open source software at schools
"Are there any schools with experience of running open-source software, either OS wise or "office" software. If so I would be very keen to try to arrange a visit with a school. Any information/experiences would be great to hear. Thanks"
question posted by: nick melton (Tupton Hall School, derbyshire) on 22-Feb-07
view answer(s)

Question: VLE
"A similar question to that posed by the secondary school in stockport - how do we get started with a learning platform, we are only a two teacher school and do not have huge amounts of man hours to get this up and running. We need something which is manageable is this possible?"
question posted by: Alison Clarriocats (Lanercost CE Primary, Cumbria) on 09-Feb-07
view answer(s)

F11 – F17: The Impact of the ICT Register

F11 Respondents identify impact on their school due to the ICT Register.

> "MFL We now have the software and are doing Spanish from year 4 to year 6 although it is not compulsory until 2008. We were in the 2simple trial and the year 2s are now absolutely superb at doing mind maps and are using that for their planning of literature it has really changed how we teach certain aspects."

> "We were involved in the Softease podcasting one last term. As a result of which we now have a group of boys from the village who are involved in the local football team creating podcasts about their matches. They run it in school as a club. Only for parents so far but some of these boys are reluctant writers and they are keen to write their scripts. Only two were involved in the podcasting project but it just spread."

F12 The ICT Register enables practitioners to share expertise and stay in post. This arrangement ensures they continue to innovate at the 'chalkface'.

> "We offer training courses in our model of teaching and learning all of our lesson plans are used and we offer training in

that at level 1, 2 and 3. A level one course is five days; three days go away, try it, come back for two. Level 2 and 3 are two day courses. These are funded by the part of the Gatsby foundation under their teaching and learning planning and delivery project not subject specific funding."

"The whole staff are aware of the Register in my school as we were having over 200 visitors to the school in a year and the Register was the vehicle through which we organised all those meetings. I had a member of staff responsible for all the ICT Register, the liaison, putting stuff on the website, dealing with enquiries, leading visits around the school and involving other staff with those visits."

F13 The Register is positively perceived as unbiased, independent of government and commercial interests.

"I think the quality of information is good because it's based on real experience as opposed to trying to lead you in a particular direction. I have nothing to gain from telling schools a particular point of view. I don't think the other schools have either.

"I can deal with bias from company websites but the reason I go to the Register site is because there us a hell of a lot there. I know I'm going to get

through to real schools as opposed to companies."

"I go to the company website to find out about a product but then can go to schools for the reality."

"Useful for information without a 'sales pitch' and lack of bias which can appear even at local authority level."

Some respondents did however raise concerns that some services required fee payments and this may give rise to a conflict of interest or charges of self–promotion by individuals or schools.

F14 Although there are alternatives to some aspects of the ICT Register none have this unique combination or range of supportive activities.

Sources of information around ICT in schools mentioned by the respondents included: BECTA – 'Top Teachers', LEA websites and networks, DfES Standards Site, SSAT, SLICT (NCSL communities – Talk2Learn), Naace, BETT, CLCs and CLC forum, personal contacts and networks. Interviewees were asked for some comparison of the value of the ICT Register and the alternatives.

"If I want to know something then I go straight to 'Google' and I guess the majority of the world does just the same.

What the Register offers is information from those people who have been there and done it, an expert in wireless technology is great but they may not have done this in the school".

"In the ICT Register the schools that are members tend to be the leading schools not just everybody who fancies joining. You can see leading practice. If I went onto the Becta forums and looked up VLEs and things like this the chances are I would get very few if any replies on the forums that I'm a member of. If I go onto the ICT Register there's quite a few of them who have them."

"I think people have a slightly different relationship with Becta than they do with the SSAT or the ICT Register. Becta have an agenda and are still a wing of government. They have to be on message. I'm not sure people see them as being independent."

"..because it's about the teaching and learning base. Becta is about just new technologies... this has got a focus on teaching and learning and how new technologies can support."

"If you've got teachers who are not particularly involved in new technologies and ICT they won't be as confident or familiar with going on to maybe the Becta website."

" If it's something through the SSAT, it's actually surrounded by a whole plethora of other initiatives and support mechanisms which go way beyond new technologies. So I think it's the organisation that's got the understanding of how teaching and learning works and how it links into the other initiatives."

"Now with most schools going specialist and the international framework as well, it brings everything together. It's underpinned by a lot more than ICT."

"I go to the company website to find out about a product but then can go to schools for the reality."

F16 The ICT Register team recognise the importance of maintaining high standards of advice and interaction within the register.

The criteria for inclusion in the register are described on the website.

Register school status is reviewed and the schools are encouraged to regularly update their profile on the Register website.

> "The ICT Register is groundbreaking and is doing the job we have the ICT Mark which is disconnected."

The ICT Register team prefer register schools to have the ICT Mark but exercise judgement where a school has strengths

and is in the process of applying for the mark.

> "This arrangement is largely bypassing the local authority."

The ICT Register has invited Local Authorities to nominate schools but with limited response. The Register employs a variety of methods to identify potential register schools including SSAT regional staff and BECTA.

F17 Much of the activity of the ICT Register is hidden.

The respondents often described extensive connections and networks which they employed. These often resulted from ICT Register activity but for a variety of reasons, largely due to workload, were not recorded. Some useful and important work can remain within a local cluster.

> "Because people don't necessarily use the easily trackable route, it would be a terrible shame if the benefits of the Register were underestimated. ……… It's acting as a very significant hub or focus sometimes in ways which are hard to touch."

F18- F21: ICT Register Activities

F18 The ICT Register appears to be in a unique position to support pilots, trials and research.

An ICT Register team member reported:

> "The ICT Register has just started a project to test consultancy materials to engage schools with the SRF (self review framework) Ten of our schools who then engaged a further five schools in their region who were not necessarily ICT Registered schools. We worked with them to get the schools involved with SRF. It gave the ICTR schools greater insight and knowledge which they then can employ in their contacts.

> It has benefit for Becta and a benefit for schools by having a group of schools which are innovative and willing to get involved in development work. It's very difficult for Becta and the industry to find on their own. "

They went on to argue that the ICT Register offers:

> "…access to a wider community with expertise and willingness to engage in research. Something government agencies in particular find it difficult to do because they are government agencies."

The evaluators are aware that some companies have formed their own networks both in the UK and globally but to our knowledge these are limited in scope and have a relatively static membership. The structure of the ICT Register appears to offer an opportunity for larger longitudinal study which more transitory relationships would not support.

F19 The ICT Register supports activities at school level.

Support is offered to those involved in the ICT Register network in a variety of ways. Each Focus school receives £1000 per annum for their extra administrative costs. One respondent described how his school enjoys further support from the LA. Teachers from the school offer hands on support to other local schools.

> "£21k from the LA enables us to release staff at all levels and provide resources including 60 table PCS. It's ICT focus group funding and cluster funding.

> This is good for staff development as they help other schools but it develops us all.

Would these contacts carry on without ICT Register funding?

> "Yes but on a more ad hoc basis because we then have to provide it after school. Most of

our schools are small. Targeted funding is essential.

> Money devolved to schools will mean that the funding is absorbed to fund other aspects of provision. If the money is not ring-fenced in some away it will be lost and absorbed in the budget and we won't get the same support going into schools.

> For example I spend three times as much on special needs as I am given"

> "All Register Schools and Learning Centres will respond to initial enquiries free of charge but if you need to engage a centre to give you extended help and support you may be asked to contribute to costs. "

Small levels of funding appear to be used effectively but there are fears that funding will be short term.

F20 The related activities including Futures Vision tours, conferences and regional contact groups stimulate and support the formation of viral networks.

Attendance at these events made clear the value of these related activities – they had high quality, inspirational inputs, but were also designed for substantial networking to develop.

> "Through the software trials and the Futures Vision tour. That's where I got some inspiration. That fed into the work we do in the CLC which fed into the schools."

F21 The ICT Register website describes a wide variety of services and expertise under the Register School profiles.

A 'service' description offered by one school suggests the register has the potential to inform and be informed by international practice.

> "We can partner with ICT developers and manufacturers to help promote, evaluate and contextualise ICT products in the Asian education market. We can serve as a hub to collect user feedback, organise showcases, and arrange for ICT collaborations with other schools.

> The school is well connected in an excellent network with schools and organisations in Hong Kong, China and beyond, combining with its other attributes to facilitate successful international conferences and staff development programmes."

We can host seminars and workshops; helping to identify and invite potential participants, students, customers and partner organisations in Hong Kong;

liaising between users, ICT experts and policy stakeholders in an effective way." – St Paul's Convent School, Hong Kong.

Conclusions

All respondents, from User Schools and Register Schools expressed support for the ICT Register and the related activities. Most could be characterised as enthusiasts. There is considerable enthusiasm for the notion of collaborative peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge and expertise. This sharing operates on a number of levels from the simple email or phone call, extended dialogue, visits of hours or several days. Some schools are resolved to continue to work collaboratively over several years.

The register is offering foci for these activities which range from the exchange of simple facts (explicit knowledge) to larger scale professional development. Crucially this includes the sharing of tacit, sometimes referred to as 'sticky' knowledge, which can only be exchanged between practitioners in dialogue within their context. This kind of dialogue is essential for innovation to impact on the culture of learning and teaching and for real change to happen.

The Register has aggregated and focused human capital and expertise. In serving that function it has generated considerable social capital both directly and by linking the Register with existing SSAT structures and networks. With continued and enhanced support there is potential for this virtuous circle to be continued and expanded.

It became clear, during the course of the interviews that activity recorded by the website fails to represent the true extent of the interactions facilitated by the ICT Register. It was also clear that quantifying these interactions would be difficult.

The sense of ownership felt by the practitioners is a key factor in the dynamics of the register something which should be recognised in quality assurance. The Register team recognise that there are risks in innovation; what seems 'whizzy' (a term used by a LA respondent) may eventually develop into a mainstream approach with enthusiasm and insight from a front line practitioner. Many 'Web2' tools which once enjoyed the status of 'geeky' or 'whizzy' are now major applications and approaches. The team have employed informed judgement to ensure quality assurance does not inhibit innovation in

the website or the reporting of innovations.

The Team has been responsive to suggestions for change and has implemented them only after they have ensured the integrity of the site.

The school profiles on the ICT Register website and other information provided by registered schools require constant updating but practitioners under pressure need incentives or encouragement to return and update them.

The respondents' sense of involvement and firm intention to support their peers was clearly expressed. Financial incentives are offered for Focus Schools' involvement with the ICT Register. However other proposed incentives which would attract support from respondents included:

- accreditation, as a professional mentor or facilitator;
- reports, written as case studies, qualifying for credit towards an MA or similar professional qualification;
- certification, to acknowledge the value of contributions which could be included in a CV.

The Register accepts that schools can charge for support which extends beyond the email and telephone contacts. There is some evidence that this may affect the willingness of enquirers to continue their exploration of a topic

Given that the schools are disseminating good or best practice then charging to cover the staff costs and school disruption is seen as reasonable. However, this also requires the exercise of sound quality assurance procedures and the ICT Register staff are committed to this.

Some registered schools have achieved excellent results apparently through innovation in ICT and related pedagogical developments. Not surprisingly some of those schools have a large number of visits and operate one day or even extended professional development programmes for teachers and support staff.

The requirement for an element of peer review, perhaps supported by a recognised action research approach to reporting, may be worth considering. The Becta ICT Mark is now a recognised standard and one which the SSAT has encouraged. Reporting within the website via an online forum would allow that peer to peer questioning and challenging to be transparent and current. Engagement in such a forum also offers real opportunity for deeper dialogue and the dissemination of tacit knowledge for further professional development.

A 'hotseat' function, allowing 'experts' to respond to questions on a topic over a fixed time period, may help promote the ICT Register. The responses could also be archived for future reference.

The value of Networked Learning Communities is now recognised, but creating and sustaining them is not easy. There is a need for them to be practitioner led, addressing the immediate and perceived needs of the practitioners in order to make real impact. For them to have real and transformational impact on pedagogy they need to be sustained. The ICT Register can encourage this and has further potential to support the transfer of tacit knowledge to underpin explicit knowledge.

The structure of the ICT Register offers an opportunity for a larger longitudinal study which more transitory relationships would not and there is real potential for research in various forms to support CPD. These elements justify continuation.

The ICT Register provides good value for money and has potential for further impact on teaching and learning given continued support. The range and ambition of planned developments in ICT nationally suggests there will be an increasing need and demand for the ICT Register.

Recommendations

These are grouped by topic. Some recommendations simply urge care to maintain key elements as the operation is reviewed.

Consider:

Quality Assurance

R1 reviewing each ICT Register School's status each year.

R2 continuing to encourage ICT Register schools to update their profile of expertise on a frequent and regular basis.

R3 further linking the ICT Mark status to involvement in the Register.

R4 continuing to work closely with others to identify leading practitioners and schools.

Continuing Professional Development

R5 introducing a range of incentives for practitioners and schools which contribute to the Register's knowledge bank, particularly case studies.

R6 encouraging action research approaches to the reporting of impact on learning and teaching.

R7 introducing incentives which may include accreditation or other formal recognition of the contribution of individuals.

Promotion and Development

R8 pursuing a vigorous promotion campaign for the ICT Register.

R9 encouraging all schools to view the ICT Register as a rich source of professional development and possibly seek the support of other agencies.

R10 promoting the ICT Register as a key medium for sharing expertise and tacit knowledge in major initiatives including 'Building Schools of the Future' and learning platform developments

R11 encouraging more schools internationally to become involved, in order to widen the cultural, pedagogical and technological perspective of the resource.

Website and Communication

R12 offering the opportunity to contribute with a range of alternative media to communicate information, such as short video clips and sound files.

R13 offering a regular email newsletter service, opted in by participants, to key school staff for example the headteacher, CPD coordinator, ICT manager
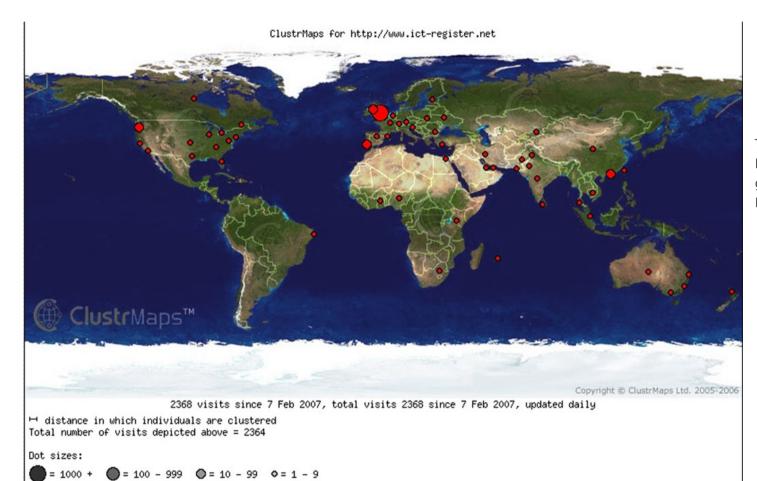
R14 further promotion and expansion of the RSS facility for staff to aggregate important news together with other important sources

R15 providing tools to encourage dialogue around issues and services which can serve as peer review and a means of encouraging further sharing of knowledge and expertise. This may include a hotseat tool.

The ethos and user experience.

R16 striving to preserve the spirit of shared purpose founded on practitioner led innovation supported by enthusiastic and insightful facilitation.
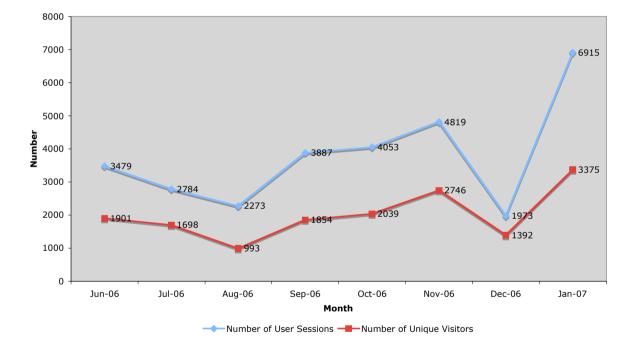
Statistics relating to the ICT Register

ClustrMaps for http://www.ict-register.net

2368 visits since 7 Feb 2007, total visits 2368 since 7 Feb 2007, updated daily

⊢ distance in which individuals are clustered
Total number of visits depicted above = 2364

Dot sizes:

● = 1000 +   ● = 100 – 999   ◎ = 10 – 99   ◇ = 1 – 9

Copyright © ClustrMaps Ltd. 2005-2006

This map shows the number of ICT Register website visits by geographical distribution from February to early March 2007

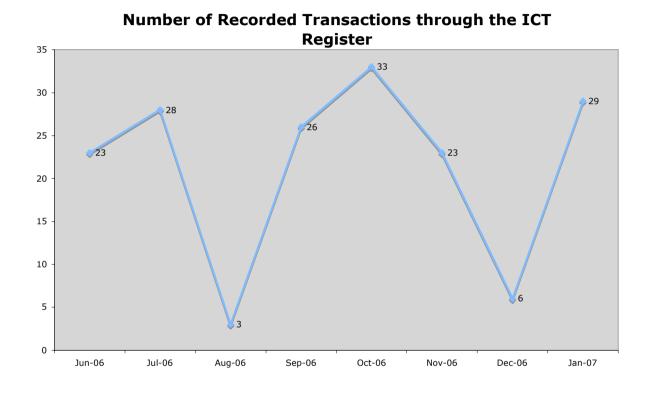# Statistical Data provided by the ICT Register

Figures were only available for a short time and statistics of are limited in this context because we are unable to measure the learning that took place as a result of these visits. There are fluctuations in these figures for the number of times the web pages on the ICT Register has been viewed per month because of the impact of school holidays. However, the general trend is favourable.

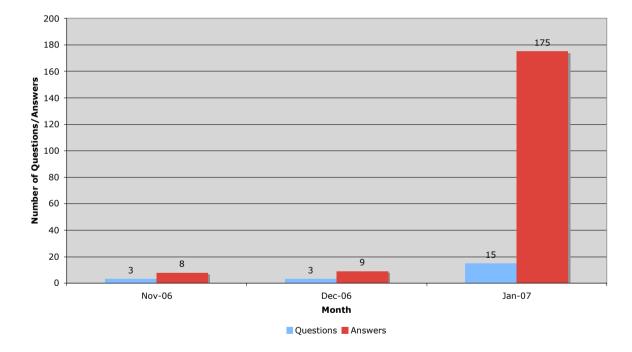**ICT Register - Monthly Usage Statistics**

These monthly usage statistics show the number of sessions that users have viewed the ICT Register, and the unique visitors show the number of different users viewing the site. Some of these users might be using different computers but the figures give some indication of how the number of different viewers. Again, these figures can not take account of variations due to school holidays.

Number of Recorded Transactions through the ICT Register

The recorded transactions figures are of limited value as many schools will use other means to communicate with others rather than the website. Many competent ICT users would 'Google' a school and maybe use the telephone to arrange a visit or ask for information, we know from talking with User schools and Registered schools that teachers will use the most convenient method to communicate as they are busy people.

Ask the Schools - number of Questions/Answers per month

These figures for the 'Ask the Schools' section of the website have been included to show the increased activity generated by this new facility. There is a small increase in the number of questions but the e-mail that alerts Registered Schools to the question has been effective in generating more responses.

Glossary

BECTA British Educational Communications and Technology Agency

BESA British Educational Suppliers Association

BETT British Education and Training Technology

BSF Building Schools for the Future

CLC City Learning Centre

CPD Continuing Professional Development

DfES Department for Education and Science

GTC General Teaching Council

LEA/LA Local Education Authority

Naace originally the National Association of Advisors for Computers in Education

NCSL National College for School Leadership

OFSTED Office for Standards in Education

PDA Personal Digital Assistant (electronic handheld information device)

Register School - An accredited provider of ICT Register advice.

Register Provider - An accredited provider of ICT Register advice which may not be a school e.g. A CLC

RSS Really Simple Syndication

SLICT Strategic Leadership in Information Computer Technology (UK)

SSAT Specialist Schools and Academy Trust

VLE Virtual Learning Environment also called Learning Platform

Appendices

These appendices are to reinforce the background material which informs this evaluation. In Appendix 2 we have extracted a section in which David Hargreaves explains the importance of practitioner knowledge and sharing which is arguably an untapped resource in education.

The General Teaching Council have recently published a clear account of the potential for CPD and some of this is quoted here in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1

Extract from: David Hargreaves - About Learning – Report of the Learning Working Group – Demos 2004

"Teachers look to other teachers as the most credible source of new ideas and good practices. The adopted line is clear: if a practice works for one of my trusted

colleagues, it will probably work for me too." Page 8

"**What we know: the evidence from professional practice.**

Teachers often turn to other teachers for ideas on improving ways on teaching and helping students to learn, and it has been a sensible part of government policy to strengthen this peer-to-peer learning of working laterally through various kinds of partnership, collaboration and networking.

This process is frequently referred to as 'the dissemination of good practice'. It is now recognised, however, that 'good practice' and 'best practice' are for the most part used very loosely, or even as synonyms. It is not enough to claim vaguely that a practice works for us, or it works here, so it's unquestionably a good practice. For a professional practice to be justified as 'good', either within the profession or by academics or by policy makers, it should meet certain criteria, but these criteria are usually implicit rather than explicit. For a professional practice to be defined as 'best' rather than simply 'good' it should be demonstrably better than other practices, again by explicit criteria.

Yet this is rarely done, even in academic journals or OfSTED reports. Both the National Educational Research Forum and

the **Specialist Schools Trust** are committed to refining the criteria for making judgements about the quality of teachers' practices and it is important that there should be a special emphasis on the practices that claim to have a positive impact on learning and learning to learn, not just test performance." Page 15

"There is a vast pool of creativity among the profession that remains only partially tapped; there is unprecedented quality of leadership in schools/colleges that is well prepared to engage in disciplined innovation; and there is within the research community a strong commitment to work on the learning agenda in D&R partnerships with schools/colleges. The question is whether the government is willing to support and broker partnerships with school leaders and researchers to channel this creative energy to bring us to the international leading edge in advancing the frontiers of learning and learning to learn." Page 22

Appendix 2

Extract from: Making CPD better: Bringing together research about CPD – January 2007 TPLF07 GTC

1. Broader and deeper CPD

Sustained interactions and interventions give more breadth and depth than short or one-off courses. However, unless this richer conception of CPD is more widely and consistently promoted, the majority of teachers may continue to equate professional development with Inset (in-service training). Page 5

2. Teacher influence

The more influence teachers have over their professional development – and especially in tailoring CPD to meet their needs – the more likely they are to find it effective. More generally, the research lends support to the importance of designing CPD that holds teachers' professionalism and individual expertise as a central value.

Effective CPD maintains a clear focus on pupils' learning.

It is grounded in what is known about effective adult learning.

This includes:

- sustained access to coaching and mentoring, for getting support with knowledge and/or skills;

- opportunities to see good practice in action, both in

- classrooms and in adult learning environments;

- a range of opportunities for observation and feedback as part

- of collaborative and collegial working practices; and

- sustained, structured and cumulative opportunities for practising and evaluating what has been learnt. Page 6

Research messages about the local delivery of CPD

Local authorities can help make CPD more effective at school level, and so aid school improvement. But there is great variation across the country in how well CPD is conceived and coordinated. Effective professional development should make full use of input and support from external sources of expertise. Generally, these will include teacher educators in higher

education institutions and also professional staff in subject and specialist associations.

Schools and their staff can benefit greatly from collaborative working between schools to share knowledge and practice, although there may be a need for some local authority support in setting up and sustaining appropriate activities. Page 8

Teachers also continue to express a need for more training in using information and communications technology (ICT) in their

teaching, and for strengthening and/or updating their skills and knowledge in curriculum subject areas. Page 3

So, with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, we commissioned the late Professor Ray Bolam and his colleague Dick Weindling to bring together the key lessons from twenty of these studies. They comprise five systematic literature reviews, six studies using surveys and/or case studies, and nine evaluation reports. Between them, the studies offered good evidence on a number of key issues.

The full report, which includes references to all twenty studies, can be downloaded from the GTC website at:

http://www.gtce.org.uk/research/commissioned_res/cpd1/