Web Resources
for Teachers by Teachers

(WEBRITTe)

Raising Standards and Transforming Teaching

Pre-pilot evaluation
January - March 2001

The resource evaluation process

Since 1998 the Government has invested some £1.8 billion in the National Grid for Learning and NOF teacher training with the aim of helping teachers use ICT to raise standards and to transform teaching and learning. The MirandaNet Fellowship in collaboration with TeacherNet at the Department for Education are developing a project to increase teachers' awareness of the National Grid for Learning resources, to promote ownership of this new medium and to consult with teachers by peer review.

This pre-pilot includes a celebration of teachers' existing work on the Web and continuing resource development by teachers for teachers. Approximately one hundred experienced teachers and advisers have evaluated a subset of 1,000 resources from government and commercially owned sites using an evaluation template developed by Anne Sparrowhawk, Teachers Evaluating Multimedia TEEM. A resource web site on the DfEE TeacherNet site will present the outcomes of the pre-pilot. An e-mentoring service has also been set up to support the evaluation project teams.

Practising teachers will be asked to comment on selected classroom resources by the evaluation team at the Education Show, Birmingham and at The Teachers' International Forum (CAL01) at the University of Warwick during March. Those respondents wishing to be further involved in the project will be encouraged to register their interest with the team.

Preliminary Evaluation Trends

The formative evaluation is a dynamic process building a living resource of teachers' work on the TeacherNet site. This pre-pilot is designed to meet teachers' expressed classroom requirements.

The expert evaluation team of teachers and advisers covers all Key Stages and subject specialisms. This team was generally experienced at using the Internet for school purposes. They consistently included research, accessing government information, searching for resources, creating classroom resources and supporting classroom teaching among their reasons for using the Internet.

A questionnaire was sent to the evaluation team carrying out the initial audit to record their views after they had explored their range of resources. During the Education Show and at CAL01 the same evaluation team will use a similar questionnaire to explore perceptions of the value of the Internet for a wider body of the profession in face to face interviews. The respondents will comment on a range of Web resources that have been selected as examples of good practice.

The data collected can be compared with the responses from this initial expert group. The analysis will focus on professional development issues with the aim of finding methods of encouraging wider use by teachers of web resources. Pointers will also be recorded on the factors that prompt teachers to share resources on the web.

Some evidence is emerging from the existing expert sample that illustrates trends in teachers' choices of web resource and their perception of value. There are clear differences in response from primary and secondary specialists.

In Primary Schools the main delivery model is access to a computer with Internet service within a teaching context, either in a classroom or a computer suite. This teaching context means that primary teachers are looking actively for Internet resources that they can share with children. Teachers expect the resources to be interactive and support their subject teaching. Ideally the resources should be downloadable and also reliable.

At secondary school, the replies suggest two models of working. Where teachers have access to a computer suite or Internet access within the classroom, they are looking for interactive materials that they can use with the class. Where this provision is not available, the sites that are most valued are more informational, and are more likely to be a teacher resource, or a teaching idea. Consistently comments were made about the quality of the teaching ideas. Ideas that reflected clear teaching and learning objectives were universally valued. Although this first analysis of trends represents less than 10% of the expected final responses, it is interesting to note that primary specialists do not seem to want lesson ideas as much as secondary teachers.

Some of the primary and secondary teachers in the sample use the web for professional and administrative purposes. For example, the availability of texts in electronic format means that they can search Government produced documents to use for meetings and reports, as well as retrieving texts that they wish to incorporate into their teaching.

This initial data is now being analysed to identify the characteristics of good sites for different purposes. Data collection at the two education events will establish whether these trends exhibited by expert users are borne out by less experienced Internet users, and by further analysis of the data, whether there are gaps in resource provision.

In addition, two other questionnaires are being distributed. One will explore teachers' perception of copyright issues. The other questionnaire for companies will investigate their model for industry education partnership in developing web based resources for teachers.

Post March Pilot Phase

Identifying a community of teachers online who will engage in this ongoing process will be crucial to the success of the pilot phase. This will involve consulting further on the outcomes of the audit with the profession to ensure their views are represented. Reviewed resources will be placed on the Internet for peer review/comments.

The next stage is to fill the gaps with appropriate lesson plans and linked resources in selected subjects. Quality assurance of new and existing (those identified in the pre-pilot) resources will be crucial and fundamental to this process.

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