

Study Summary

Taming IT..... One click closer? An Investigation of Joint Practice Development as a Model of Continuing Professional Development for the Improvement of Teachers ICT Skills

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Focus

In this study, the researchers investigated Joint Practice Development (JPD), in which colleagues work together to identify and solve problems. They wanted to know whether JPD would work as an effective form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to improve teachers' Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills.

Context and dimensions

The teaching and learning development manager and a tutor at Cambridge Regional College established five JPD projects. These were organised with colleagues across three institutions in East Anglia. They worked with five colleagues from their own college and three further individuals from other Further Education institutions in East Anglia.

Key intervention and teaching and learning process

JPD was used to develop teachers ICT skills. A community of practice was set up between the institutions.

Outcomes/impact

The researchers found that:

- collaboration between colleagues who had a pre-existing trust-based relationship yielded positive results faster than partnerships which started from scratch;
- the majority of practitioners placed a high value on the support of their peers during CPD activities;
- time was a major issue, but due to their enthusiasm, participants worked during breaks or at home; and
- current ICT CPD models provide little more than basic skills. Such activities were seldom contextualized, nor did they provide knowledge of Web 2 or Flash-based technologies.

The researchers concluded that teacher collaboration, and in particular the JPD model, can provide a system of ICT CPD that is both efficient and effective. The study highlighted areas of development needs, especially in the area of Virtual Learning Environment development and the tracking of learners' achievement.

The project has enabled the three institutions to begin the process of developing productive collaborative relationships. Practitioners now collaborate in the use of new software to improve teaching and learning, and work together to create teaching resources relevant to their own classroom contexts. There is also a great deal of enthusiasm for developing ICT skills and the use of ICT.

The practitioners have submitted a first draft of their assignment for the Masters Module in Advancing Pedagogy. They presented a poster at the LSIS Annual Research Conference, March 2011.

Methods

Before and after the study, the researchers held interviews with participants and managers. In this way, they identified understandings, attitudes and factors which impacted on the development of teachers' ICT skills. The researchers took part in most of the JDP activities, as they wanted to experience the process more closely and to gain, at first-hand, knowledge of using the JPD model. This raised issues of impartiality, which they guarded against by challenging each others' views. They also conducted a literature review.

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