

Podcasts, Blogs and Robotics

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Project Title	Podcasts, Blogs and Robotics: Professional Development for the Longreach School District
Project Team	Professor Neil Anderson, Ms Lyn Courtney (SiMERR Queensland), Gemma Cameron (Longreach State School)
Period	March 07 – November 07
Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR Queensland

Description

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This project involved the delivery of professional development for teachers with respect to robotics and its communication via podcasts and blogs. A one-day workshop was delivered to Longreach teachers in October, 2007. These teachers are now able to provide similar podcasts, blogs and robotics workshops for teachers in the nearby rural school districts: Muttaburra, Ilfracombe and Isisford. The project targeted important aims outlined in the recent National Statements of Learning for Information Communication Technologies (2006). These aims included: learning with ICT to create new understandings; creating ICT solutions by selecting appropriate ICT, generating ideas, planning, monitoring and reflecting; using ICT creatively and imaginatively; and operating a range of current and emerging ICT to support and enhance learning in curriculum areas.

Robotics kits, a laptop computer and an iPod recorder (on loan) were provided to the Longreach State School and the teacher and ICT Coordinator participated in the on-day workshop. The ICT District Coordinator presented this workshop to other teachers in the Wider Outback Schools. Podcasts and blogs were developed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between the schools (students and teachers) in the cluster.

Participants

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Participants included one IT teacher at Longreach State School and the District IT coordinator participating in a one-day robotics workshop. The District IT Coordinator then taught three other teachers in a district workshop. This one-day workshop has also been presented to the Wider Outback Schools.

Findings

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The initial school found the program to have a positive impact on student learning. This program has been established for the Longreach cluster and the wider 'outback cluster'. General comments have been favourable from all participants (teachers and students). However, a follow-up study would be prudent in order to ascertain the long-term teaching and learning benefits to teachers and students.

Outcomes

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A Longreach District robotics cluster has been established. Students from the cluster participate in blogs and podcasts sharing of robotics knowledge and problem solving. The cluster hosts regional robotics competitions and winners of these competitions are eligible for state, national and international competitions. The equipment remained at the school to be used in future projects, which enables this program to be sustainable.

Conference presentation

- Anderson, N., & Cameron, G. (2008). Enhancing a Robotics Unit with Social Computing Tools in the Queensland Outback. Proceedings of the Australian Computers in Education Conference, Canberra.

Impact

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Teachers and students gained experience and skill in robotics, postcasts and blogs for knowledge sharing and problem solving. The literature indicated that student's problem solving skills and learning would increase. While this was not measured, this is an expected impact. It would be advantageous to measure the impact in a future, larger project. After presenting the outcomes of the project to the wider 'outback cluster' group, it was decided that all schools would replicate the project on a larger scale. This provides evidence that the original school assess a positive impact on student learning.

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