

Partnerships in ICT in Learning (PICTL)

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Project Title	Partnerships in ICT in Learning (PICTL)
Project Team	Mr Ralph Leonard, Ms Michelle Williams (Australian Council for Computers in Education), Professor John Pegg, Dr Chris Reading (SiMERR National Centre), Ms Katherine Schoo (Australian Curriculum Studies Association)
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Funding Agency	DEST (Australian Government Quality Teaching Program)
Organisational Base	SiMERR National Centre

Description

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This research study explored the critical need in Australian schools to forge stronger links between pre-service teacher education and the continuing professional development provided by educational systems. It aimed to draw together teacher educators, teachers and pre-service teachers into partnerships to improve what students learn, how they learn and how ICT supports the process.

It contained two parts:

- A national PICTL Professional Community – a professional community of stakeholders sharing their knowledge and experience to draw conclusions about the potential of partnerships between universities and schools to improve teacher education and use of ICT in schools; and
- Local state and territory projects – where a partnership between schools and the university was used to forward agendas on a local level.

The research tested partnership approaches in the Australian setting. The partnerships that were explored aimed to improve student outcomes by transforming teaching and learning environments through the use of technology-rich models and approaches for students, pre-service teachers, practicing teachers and teacher educators. The partnerships were also about immersing lecturers in new curriculum reforms and contributing to debates about the value of innovative approaches.

Partnership projects were formed in each state and territory. For universities, this involved implementing programs that transform the teaching and learning process in teacher education by embedding ICTs throughout the entire educational experience of all future teachers, in partnership with schools and education systems. For schools, this involved risk taking with ICT within innovative approaches to curriculum and pedagogical reforms, through providing pre-service teachers with opportunities to take leadership in trying new ideas in classrooms. It was about broadening the professional communities in schools to include teacher educators and pre-service teachers as co-learners and co-researchers in the quest to improve student use of ICT in schools.

At the national level there was online collaboration between the state/territory project leaders, visits by a project manager to each state/territory project and a concluding national forum, involving all stakeholders. At the state/territory level partnership projects were implemented and evaluated.

Participants

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Australian Capital Territory - Robert Fitzgerald (University of Canberra), 12 pre-service (secondary) teachers, 2 schools (1 government, 1 non-government);

New South Wales - Chris Reading, Linley Lloyd (University of New England), Sue Belford (Department of Education), 8 schools (7 government, 1 Catholic), 8 teams each consisting of a lecturer, a pre-service (primary) teacher, and a teacher;

Northern Territory - Mike Grenfell (Charles Darwin University), 4 pre-service teachers, 2 schools, teachers;

Queensland - Colin Baskin, Ruth Hickey, Neil Anderson (James Cook University), 16 pre-service teachers, 2 schools, teachers;

South Australia - Bruce White, Ruth Geer (University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Campus), Dean Clark (South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services), pre-service teachers, lecturers, 7 teachers and staff from the Technology School of the Future;

Tasmania - Andrew Fluck (University of Tasmania), pre-service teachers, 6 schools, 6 teachers;

Victoria - Sue McNamara, Mellita Jones, Karen McLean (Australian Catholic University National), schools (Catholic), five teams consisting of lecturer, pre-service teachers and teachers; and

Western Australia - Paul Newhouse (Centre for Schooling and Learning Technologies), Julie Hewson (Edith Cowan University), 2 groups of pre-service teachers, 2 schools, 2 groups of teachers.

Findings

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Seven principles were developed that should underpin any future recommendations concerning embedding ICT in learning. Most importantly, the need for a 're-invigoration of a national commitment to embedding ICT in learning' was identified. This needs to include investment in research and change of policy.

Altogether, 20 recommendations were made to the various stakeholder groups: DEST (Department of Education, Science and Training), education authorities, regulatory authorities, professional associations and tertiary institutions. These recommendations were in the areas of creating ICT partnerships, sustaining professional learning partnerships, supporting professional learning, supporting effective management, and planning ICT learning activities and innovation.

Overall, the state and territory project findings indicate that models for partnerships need to vary to suit local contexts and to take advantage of local circumstances. A five phase Professional Learning Model was proposed to provide tight guidelines for projects but at the same time allow flexibility for project team leaders. Any future projects involving partnerships should follow this model and provide an overarching framework (guiding management, funding, and underlying theories) in which projects can operate, but should also allow individuality to suit local needs.

These were also seven recommendations proposed to guide the management of such partnership projects in the future, including the need to have a central management structure at the top project level to assist any local projects being implemented.

Outcomes

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- Pegg, J., Reading, C., & Williams, M. (2007). Partnerships in ICT Learning Study: Full Report. Canberra, Australia: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Pegg, J., Reading, C., & Williams, M. (2007). Partnerships in ICT Learning Study: Report. Canberra, Australia: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Reading, C. (Ed.) (2007). Partnerships in ICT Learning Study: Case Studies. Canberra, Australia: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Reading, C. (2007, November). Partnerships in ICT Learning (PICTL). Presentation at the National Summit of the Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia, Canberra, ACT.

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This study was developed as a pilot of partnerships to promote the use of ICT in learning, arising from the recommendations of the 2001 DEST Making Better Connections Report. Further funding is now needed to allow larger scale promotion of Partnerships ICT in Learning.

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