A framework for judging the impact of ICT projects in East Lothian schools

Colleagues in East Lothian shared the common desire to find a way to assess how use of ICT was having an impact on learning

In January 2008 Education and Children's Services convened a meeting of stakeholders to look at how this might be approached

It was agreed that such a framework needed to have these characteristics

1 Clear

   Any framework has to be comprehended at first reading by those who are not party to the minutiae of ICT operations or to the jargon of learning and teaching. The target should be to have a result which can be read by a child/young person or their parents/carers

2 Flexible

   The wide range of projects being trialled in East Lothian schools, as elsewhere, demonstrate that the framework has to be adaptable without enormous contrivance to a diversity of situations and timescales

3 Respectable

   A framework which depends only upon its own objectives, such as those associated with integrated learning systems, will produce understandable scepticism. It would be better if the framework was based on one or more sets of criteria which have an acknowledged validity beyond East Lothian

The following existing frameworks were considered

1 *Improving Scottish education: ICT in learning and teaching* was published by HMIE in March 2007. Although not designed as a self-evaluation framework, the 72 'Signposts to improvement' in each of the sub-sections were quite attractive in being positive and certainly respectable, though far too numerous

2 *Using ICT in Learning and Teaching* was published by HMIE in September 2004 as part of its self-evaluation series. This had an adaptation of 6 quality indicators from the second edition of *How good is our school?* with appropriate key questions. Although attractive on several grounds, its facility was hugely reduced by the publication of the third version of HGIOS in March of the previous year (2007)

3 The MIICE quality framework has been adapted in East Lothian for a range of purposes, including the impact of wireless networks in primary schools, in mathematics departments in 2 pilot secondary schools and for incorporation into a former general quality assurance programme

None of these existing frameworks met all the criteria. The production of a framework for each project clearly has attractive features in terms of purpose. But it would require a lot of work and would not provide a ready means of comparing the impact of the diversity of projects which now represents the norm for schools' use of ICT

A number of ways to create a single framework was considered

- through deliberations of a representative working party

- from the 17 signposts in section 4 on the impact of ICT from the 2007 HMIE document

- from a selection of HGIOS quality indicators, perhaps in association with MIICE

- from a selection from MIICE, which is linked to both HGIOS and the capacities and sub-capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence

It was agreed that the emerging framework should be trialled in a range of primary and secondary schools against several different types of ICT-related activity, including the TeachMeet roadshow approach to professional development within schools and clusters, the use of the EduBuzz blogging tool and games-based learning in schools

There was also consideration about how the evaluation would be done, with the following being considered

- structured interview with stakeholders (staff, pupils, parents)

- surveys and questionnaires

- peer review

- classroom observation

- diaries or equivalent (such as blogs)

- case studies, including video forms

The next stages of discussion focused around 8 themes from a selection of 6 QIs from the third edition of HGIOS, linked to a selection of relevant questions from the MIICE toolbox and taken from the sub-set of 12 QIs used for general school inspections by HMIE

- Learners' experience [2.1]
- The school's success in involving parents, carers, families [2.2]
- The curriculum [5.1]
- Teaching for effective learning [5.2]
- Meeting learning needs [5.3]
- Partnership with learners and parents [5.7]

The questions under these headings related to active learning, enterprising learning, reflective learning, creative learning, structured learning, collaborative learning and to aspects of the school culture and the processes for management of learning

It was also agreed that structured interviews should be the initial way in which the framework would be trialled. For most of the questions the 6-point scale from HGIOS was to be used

The trialling was done in the following 6 schools

Campie Primary School, Musselburgh
Law Primary School, North Berwick
Musselburgh Grammar School

Pencaitland Primary School
Ross High School, Tranent
Saltoun Primary School, East Saltoun

A total of 31 interviews was arranged and conducted in April and May 2008. There were 19 interviews with staff (including both those who are experienced and committed to use of ICT and those who remain diffident), 8 interviews with groups of young people (from the middle primary stages to S4) and 4 groups of parents (both primary and secondary schools)

Samples of the questions used, reflecting the emerging framework, are attached

1 Staff in Campie Primary School in Musselburgh (covering TeachMeet roadshow, EduBuzz, games)

2 Pupils in Musselburgh Grammar School (covering use of ICT in classes, EduBuzz, games)

3 Parents (covering use of ICT and EduBuzz)

A report was published in June 2008, which included the following conclusion

"While the investigation threw up a huge array of evidence of the messy reality of the roles of ICT in learning, it is possible to discern some general trends amid the wealth of nuance

"• The tenor of most of the discussions was entirely positive. Even when those being interviewed had criticisms, they were articulated in tones of disappointment rather than loss of all hope

"• Only a minority of teachers interviewed were sceptical about the potential for ICT to make learning and teaching better in important respects. Low ratings reflects the extent to which realisation fell short of the potential in most cases"

The contribution of MIICE

The ambition of the group which was seeking a framework for judging the success of a variety of ICT initiatives initially rotated around the use of selected quality indicators from How good is our school?, which is widely accepted and understood. But this was not designed as a 'tool' to measure the extent of progress in learning and teaching when using ICT, or by any other means. It addresses more strategic rather than tactical issues

MIICE was able to help to fill the gap: to address the 'larger' issues which matter when reviewing policy and practice and setting goals for future policy and practice by articulating what general pedagogic progress is like

Colleagues in East Lothian would commend the use of the MIICE framework as a speedy and reliable means of addressing important general issues in a practical and manageable way