Leading Classroom-Based Enquiry 1

Warwick Institute of Education

Case Study 1: Using ICT in subject teaching

Sally is a geography teacher in her third year of teaching. Her school had invested heavily in computer facilities and had put on some introductory sessions on using computers for teachers. These did not grab the attention of many in the school but Sally saw something in the use of the internet that interested her. Teachers were encouraged to try out ICT in their lessons and Sally focused on the use of the internet within the project work pupils were carrying out. She saw several attractions. Pupils seemed generally interested in using ICT and were doing so increasingly on their own initiative. She felt the sites she had seen were more visual and more up to date than any of the text books they were using. But why bother to change? She was very satisfied with the classes she was teaching, no-one else in her department seemed particularly bothered about using computers and she risked upsetting the relationships she had with pupils by trying something new. However, she decided to hang on to the idea of introducing ICT as she felt that it gave her opportunities to make her teaching more exploratory. For example, there were so many resources over the world wide web that pupils would have to make their own decisions on what to look at and where to follow up links.

The ICT room was booked for a series of sessions with her Y9 pupils. She felt confident in her use of the equipment but had the support of an ICT technician in case things went wrong. She made her own evaluations of the lessons and organised some peer observations with a colleague who was carrying out a similar innovation in another department. She felt the pupils responded really well to using ICT and in particular the more challenging pupils seemed more 'on task'. The best work was of very high

standard, it looked more professional, it had incorporated relevant images and references to events were up to date. On the debit side she felt there had been too much 'playing around'; some pupils were flicking from site to site looking for the most appealing images, there was too much cutting and pasting of text into final reports and too little thought about the quality and reliability of sources. Overall she felt there was enough in the use of ICT to make it worthwhile continuing with another project but she was going to make changes. She developed a more directed style of working – she set tasks around certain web sites she had selected and explained much more clearly how she wanted pupils to write reports. She modelled what they had to do. Her review of pupils' work was now much more positive. She went on to make much more use of ICT and developed a site of materials for pupils to access out of school.

Commentary

The scenario illustrates a teacher who made a quite radical move from not using ICT to someone who considered the use of ICT in her planning as second nature. This came about because she could see that the use of ICT was strategically important for the school. However, she could only become committed to the use of ICT when she developed her own thoughts on the kinds of programmes and found her own teaching style. Her initial idea was that ICT would allow a more learner centred approach. In fact she back tracked a little from this stance but it did not matter, it gave her the motivation to get started. She was further encouraged as she felt that pupils would respond well to using computers and very largely they did. Evaluation was important in the project, in particular she had found it valuable to pair up and discuss experiences with a colleague. This enabled her to get other perspectives and later to refine her project.