Craven College: Embedding mobile and digital technology in teaching and learning

Summary

Craven College has increased the use of technology across many curriculum areas. This was achieved by centralising the management of e-learning within the Teacher Education, Staff Development and Learning Resources departments. They developed a technology-focused ‘roadshow’ and trialled technology in different departments, encouraging staff to choose what would be useful for them, rather than being centrally imposed. The result is increased enthusiasm for the use of technology and willingness of tutors to try new methods of working in order to improve the students’ learning experience.

About Craven College

Craven College began life in 1894. Since then the college has responded successfully to the needs of the local, regional and national economy and the interests of the local community. They have grown in size, added new curriculum areas and ensured resources reflect industry standards. Their mission of "enriching life through learning" is at the heart of what they do.

The challenge

Craven College delivers a wide range of academic and vocational subjects and courses from pre-entry to Degree level across 11 sites. They educate a diverse group of students progressing from 100 feeder schools across 400 square miles of Lancashire, the Yorkshire Dales and Moors, Harrogate, Ilkley and Otley - the remote locations increase the likelihood of disruption to learning from bad weather.

Craven College identified the importance of ensuring staff skills are developed in order for them to be able to maintain the learning process despite a range of diverse situations and disruptions. E-learning and the use of educational technology had been under-developed. This project highlights how they have
begun to increase the availability and use of technology across many areas of the college.

**The activity**

The use of educational technology became a priority when e-learning became managed and overseen in connection with Teacher Education, Staff Development and Learning Resources. Having all those elements ‘under one roof’ enabled a holistic picture to be developed to support both staff and students.

The first move to using more technology occurred when the college introduced the use of electronic Individual Learning Plans (e-ILPs). To raise awareness and interest in using a range of educational technology, Craven College took advantage of a roadshow delivered by their JISC Regional Support Centre that consisted of a showcase of a range of technology, followed by an option to borrow the ‘box of kit’ for a short time to trial. A significant part of the project was that each curriculum area decided themselves what would be best for them, rather than a decision being made centrally.

The technology the college found the most universally useful were:

- Digital Recorders
- Cameras
- Kodak Play Sport Cameras
- LearnPad Tablets

In 2011, the college purchased a range of kit for the Learning Resources Centre (LRC), including 22 LearnPad Tablets that can be used to manage resources, run android applications and connect to the internet to add interactivity and enhance lessons. To support staff, the LRC charges devices so they are ready to use when they are borrowed.

To improve skills, learning modules have been developed, using Articulate Rapid E-Learning Studio, for the College’s virtual learning environment, which can be accessed at any time by teachers when they want to learn a new skill or refresh their knowledge.

http://www.jiscrsc.ac.uk/case-studies
The outcomes

One of the biggest outcomes is the increased enthusiasm for the use of technology across a range of different departments and the willingness of tutors to try new gadgets and methods of working, with and without technology. This has significantly improved the students’ learning experience.

There is evidence of a change in issue patterns, with 2% of the total number of issues now being mobile / supportive technology. This is evidenced further by the amount of time the storeroom is empty because the technology is all being used.

The versatility of LearnPad Tablets has led them to being booked out to be used in lessons, which has increased the amount of research being undertaken by students, enabling them to develop their own learning. They have also been used to support the teaching of Numeracy.

The digital recorder and microphones have been used for:

- Practice assignment presentation
- One-to-one progress reviews with students, with the conversation then uploaded onto their ILP.

Kodak Play Sports Cameras have been used:

- To film presentations and also to film a large group discussion for students to watch back and analyse/evaluate their communication skills
- To record a guest speaker to upload videos to VLE.

![Image 2: Kodak Play Sport](http://www.jiscrc.ac.uk/case-studies)

![Image 3: Kodak Easy Share](http://www.jiscrc.ac.uk/case-studies)
The impact

Each curriculum team was encouraged to complete an evaluation of their initial and potential use of the technology and reported the following:

Digital recorder and microphones -
- Very easy to use, forgot it was there and was able to then upload the file onto their ILP without having to type it up
- Saved a lot of time
- [The students] like the idea of being able to refer to our discussion if they forgot what they wrote on their progress sheet

Kodak play sports cameras -
- Used to evaluate & reflect on presentations and discussions
- Very easy to function (although I had a initial difficulty when trying to view videos via computer/whiteboard)
- Students found the video resource very useful, especially when presentations were uploaded onto the VLE so they could access them from home to assist with homework

Learn Pads -
- Extremely easy, although quite heavy to carry… Bit frustrating when they don’t all work as well
- Students love them – they are totally absorbed by the programmes and concentrate more using these devices than I have seen them focus in any other learning environment
- Excellent way of keeping learners with LD engaged while working 1 to 1 with others

Catherine Adams, Learning and Development Manager, added that she had seen how well students reacted to the LearnPads stating; “android apps are ‘cool’ and are meeting the needs of the 16 year old market.”

The lessons learned

The key enablers to the success of this project were:

- Encouraging curriculum teams to decide what technology would be best for them and evaluate the effectiveness
- Ensuring that the long term value is looked at when deciding what technology to buy. This results in the best specification for money
being purchased, making use of offers, and flexible purchasing arrangements, when and where possible

- Holding resources centrally where possible, to improve access and availability across a range of curriculum areas.

Lessons learned and shared through evaluations by tutors and e-learning support staff include:

- Ensuring that the locations where technology is expected to be used have the infrastructure and connectivity to support their use in order to reduce frustration for tutors and students
- Learning how to use every stage of the equipment in advance, to avoid delays in the classroom and lost learning opportunities
- Being aware of the logistics involved in transporting technology from a central location to different rooms and/or campuses; Providing something to carry items in/on could help this
- Remembering to allow time for the LRC to book them out
- Remembering that while Articulate creates great learning resources, the resulting file can sometimes be large, making it difficult to share best practice outside the organisation – though if appropriate guest access can be provided to their location on the VLE.

Even though the first set of resources was bought with funding, additional technology will be purchased using college / departmental budgets. The technology has already been used across most departments and has proved that it is able to transfer across curriculum areas and is sustainable – college funds permitting.

Useful links

- Craven College
- JISC RSC Roadshow
- Articulate Rapid eLearning Authoring Software
- Avantis LearnPad
- Kodak EasyShare Digital Camera
- Kodak PlaySport Video Camera

Disclaimer

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