



MAPS Evaluation

Executive summary

Background

MirandaNet has produced this evaluation for TAG Learning. The MirandaNet Fellowship is a community of practice of professional educators who aims to transform policy and practice in teaching and learning using digital technologies. Founded in 1992, MirandaNet strives to span national, cultural, commercial and political divides to provide an innovative and inclusive forum for education professionals. These aims are achieved in five ways: by building networks; generating knowledge; sharing knowledge; building ICT capabilities and endorsing partner companies.

Building networks allows the members, teachers, senior managers, advisers, teacher educators, policy makers, educational researchers and company partners, to link up, share ideas and solve problems together.

Generating knowledge of best practices, products and services through research into new and existing ideas through our Fellows proves a valuable resource.

Sharing knowledge by disseminating and publishing research through articles in national newspapers, our website, networking, professional journals, seminars, conferences, e-zines and Teachers' TV encourages a free and open Web 2.0-sharing culture between educators.

Building educators' ICT capabilities work-based design of continuing development programmes, innovative accreditation and practitioner consultancy helps governments' agencies and departments to develop policy to improve standards and vision.

Endorsing partner companies that have innovative approaches to teaching and learning and strong corporate responsibility helps education professionals to recognise visionary products and services.

The 800 members are made up of researchers, teacher educators, company trainers, senior managers, teachers, supply teachers and teacher assistants from a range of institutions in 43 countries. 250 Fellowships have been awarded for contributions to the knowledge base. Generating over 2,000 page requests a day and a high download turnover of case studies and products, the MirandaNet website is a strong web presence for educators who are exploring the benefits of Web 2.0.

The MirandaNet Fellowship is a professional organisation of all over the world. The main foci of the quantitative, qualitative and work-based research undertaken since 1992 is in the use of ICT in education as a catalyst for change in the classroom and the development of effective ICT CPD programmes. Web 2.0 functionality has been a growing aspect of Fellows' engagement with digital technologies.

TAG Learning Ltd. was founded in 1988 by educators and now publishes and supplies creative educational software tools, peripherals, and training and support materials for schools in the UK. TAG's focus is on providing the most appropriate solutions for children, teachers and parents. It is the developer of an innovative online assessment management system called MAPS.

MAPS is web-enabled software that facilitates online assessment of student's work at KS1 to KS5 and beyond. It was developed in conjunction with teachers and LA advisors to save teachers time and make cross-curricular assessment more effective and manageable. Teachers can assign tasks to whole classes or individuals and keep track of progress, supporting a personalised learning strategy. TAG manages the system and its security. It supports Key Stages 1 through 5 and a range of curricula: GCSE/ GCE, DiDA, iMEDIA, CLAiT and Key Skills.

Pupils manage their own customisable web-based portfolio of ICT projects; accessible from school and home and upload their work to their online portfolio for marking by the teacher. The system provides a messaging system; allowing 2-way communication between teacher and pupil about the work. Assessment tasks can be created and shared online; with curriculum links; images; reference documents; templates; website links; planning; review and evaluation documents. The system is also preloaded with modifiable KS2 and KS3 ICT tasks, as well as available KS3 strategy tasks. Tasks can be assigned to individual pupils or whole

classes, allowing for tasks to be tailored to each pupil's capability. Pupils can then view the task from their portfolio; including resources required to complete the task, together with hand-in dates; giving the pupil the responsibility to build up their portfolio of ICT work. Pupils are able to provide their own self-assessment of their achievements against the outcome level descriptors, whilst teachers can annotate pupil's work and upload it.

The aim of this evaluation was to gauge the views of teacher and pupil users of its MAPS software, and the ways in which it has impacted on their teaching, learning and work management.

This research collected data from the MAPS user base, provided by TAG Learning, to investigate the perceptions of teachers and students of the impact of MAPS on learning, teaching and workflow.

Data was collected through email contact, online questionnaires and telephone interviews.

Terms of Reference

This report uses evidence collected from the data to determine the perceptions of the two key bodies of stakeholders: teachers and students.

Key benefits for both of these groups from the use of MAPS are analysed in terms of teaching, learning, workflow, and home-school links.

Of particular interests are the ways in which teachers maximise the impact of MAPS, whether through CPD, resources, ways in which they share any newly developed 'best practice', the impact of training versus non-training and transition across Key Stages.

The evaluation includes a number of comments from teachers, and extensive comments from pupils, on the impact of the MAPS on teaching, and for pupils on how it has changed their lessons.

The contribution of MAPS to the Personalised Learning agenda is briefly examined.

Methods

During June and July 2007 59 schools across England were contacted to investigate the ways in which they use TAG MAPS software, and the ways in which it has impacted on their teaching, learning and work management. Initial contact was by email, from a contact list supplied by TAG Learning. Email contact was followed by telephone calls. Data was collected through online questionnaires for both teachers and pupils. Of the 59 schools 39 in two local authorities failed to respond to the questionnaire, despite a number of attempts to involve them in the process. These schools had unresolved issues with learning platforms that precluded their response. Of the remaining 20 schools responses were received from a total of 14: a 70% response rate.

Key findings

Teaching

All the schools used MAPS for ICT. One school in the sample used MAPS for English at Key Stage 1: another school used it for Geography and Music at Key Stage 3. Other schools were working to extend the use of MAPS into other curriculum areas. Feedback from pupils suggested that they used it to store work in a number of subjects, whether or not their teachers used it.

TAG MAPS contributes to their management of the ICT curriculum and is rated as valuable or invaluable. Most useful was the ability to allocate tasks to individuals and integrate resources within the work.

Workflow

The majority of teachers (80%) use the program for reviewing, commenting on and evaluating pupil work. They see this as the main function of the program, and regard it as an invaluable tool when the majority of them only see their classes for one day a week. MAPS makes it possible for them to manage their classes, track pupil progress and improve attainment in a way that supports each individual

Teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of MAPS for a range of tasks: managing assignments, sharing resources with colleagues, tracking pupil progress, whole-school moderation and communicating with pupils. 70% of teachers rated it as being invaluable or valuable for managing assignments; 80% as invaluable or valuable for tracking pupil progress; 60% as valuable for communicating with pupils.

Home-school links

The major benefit has been the ability for pupils to review their work from home and assess their progress. The focus on improvement is linked to raised standards, and parents can see

their children's progress. However, the pupils who most benefit from (and use) the home-school links are those with broadband Internet access at home. Pupils with dial-up connections are least likely to use it; those without, not at all.

Schools recognise that this is an important consideration, and arrange access outside normal curriculum time for pupils to use MAPS for ICT work. Access to ICT facilities is provided before and after school, and at break and lunchtime. That does not necessarily guarantee that those without high-speed access at home will use school facilities, but it does redress some of the issues of equity.

Maximising the impact of MAPS

Impact of training versus non-training

Within the sample of respondents there was no significant data on this theme. Since the majority of teachers who responded were those who had recommended the program, overseen its installation and implementation within the curriculum and trained their departmental colleagues there was a considerable amount of ownership in the process. All of those who contacted felt that they had a personal relationship with company representatives when they had experienced problems – which were swiftly resolved.

Transition across Key Stages

The potential of MAPS is that it should manage the transition from one Key Stage to another with ease. The ICT Coordinators in secondary schools saw the potential of this for KS2-3 transition, but all of those who responded had not yet implemented a scheme. The implication was that primary schools had not yet considered implementing MAPS.

The reality, however, is that strategic leadership from senior management is required to make this a reality. Groups of schools need to work together to implement the technology. One additional factor may well be financial: a pricing package for a number of schools to share the program may encourage closer integration and easier transition across the Key Stages.

MAPS and Personalised Learning

A significant number of pupils regarded MAPS as 'their' environment, and felt that it was a personalised virtual learning environment. Apart from the ability to customise their personal page, the range of quizzes and tasks enabled them to develop skills and concepts, whilst individual feedback from their teachers provided them with the scaffolding to improve. The teachers surveyed regarded it as a powerful tool with those affordances, without actually using the term 'personalised learning'. However, MAPS should certainly be developed as a cost-effective way for teachers to implement the personalised learning agenda.