TL Module 5: Teacher Professional Development

Unit 2: Use of ICT to Support Lifelong Learning

Objectives:

Use of ICT to enhance teacher professional learning (UNESCO ICT-CFT 6.2).

Duration:

Total of 3 notional hours – 1.5 hour tutorial, 1 hour computer practical session and 30 minute self-study session, preferably at a computer.

A] Tutorial (1.5 hours)

Notes to Facilitator

Alert your participants to the idea that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be used to support professional development and learning in a number of ways. Technology can be used to learn more about the subjects they will teach and to provide ideas and new ways to teach them. It can also be used to expand career opportunities and it allows opportunities to network with other educators. The two main approaches to improve your current knowledge include that of formal and informal learning opportunities. The following introductory tutorial has been provided as a guide only. The tutor should research this topic ahead of the tutorial and be well versed and familiar with examples of formal and informal learning approaches as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages of each. In pairs, participants will complete the activity below and the tutor will be required to summarise the main points at the end of the discussion. For the activity in this tutorial, you will be required to navigate to the Web on your computer/laptop and demonstrate to participants some examples of formal and informal learning approaches. Several examples have been provided in the text below as a starting point, but you may substitute these with any examples you feel are more appropriate.

Introduction

"Professional development goes beyond the term 'training' with its implications of learning skills, and encompasses a definition that includes formal and informal means of helping teachers not only learn new skills but also develop new insights into pedagogy and their own practice, and explore new or advanced understandings of content and resources. [This] definition of professional development includes support for teachers as they encounter the challenges that come with putting into practice their evolving understandings about the use of technology to support inquiry-based learning. Current technologies offer resources to meet these challenges and provide teachers with a

cluster of supports that help them continue to grow in their professional skills, understandings, and interests."[1]

Working within Education you will no doubt wish at some point to enhance or improve your current skills or knowledge set. You may wish to do this for a number of reasons, for instance to:
- Gain knowledge about a particular subject or topic;
- Gain knowledge about pedagogy;
- Improve your employment opportunities;
- Find out information about changes to the curriculum structure;
- Improve your technology skills;
- Network with like-minded individuals.

(Adapted from Microsoft Educator Learning Journeys)

Fortunately, there are a number of courses and training opportunities available to those wishing to foster further professional growth. These include formal and informal learning opportunities.

- Formal learning opportunities may include courses offered physically at an institution or even online and distance learning opportunities. These range from short courses to higher degree programmes and may be in different areas, including subject knowledge, teaching skills, or wider educational issues like management. Usually, these courses are well structured and offer facilitator support. Courses offered by universities or other educational organisations may provide accreditation which could enhance your career prospects. Unfortunately, formal learning opportunities are often expensive.

- Informal learning opportunities often allow you the opportunity to tailor the resources to your own needs and learn at your own pace as there is no set curriculum or time frame. And there is usually no associated cost. You could access a variety of teacher networks, websites, associations or forums online to find out more about the latest teaching ideas or you could start your own blog with several of your colleagues and invite them to collaborate with you on a number of topics.

View Examples of Formal and Informal Learning Approaches

In choosing your professional development path, you should take the following points into consideration:
- Identify your personal professional development goals and create a plan to assist you in achieving those goals.
- The Internet is the best starting point in terms of researching which option will be most suitable for you. It will assist you in learning about the various ICT resources available that can be used to increase your knowledge of subjects taught as well as pedagogy.
- Make sure you verify the quality and credibility of the the course/resource/programme you have identified. Ask these questions as a starting point:
    - Whose website/course/resource/programme is this?
    - Why have they made it available?
    - Is the information actual, relevant and appropriate to me?
    - Is this the best option or my only option?

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[1] http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/profdevl/pd2prof.htm

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- Make sure you are aware of the cost factors involved in the approach you have chosen and are confident you have the required ICT skills to complete it. If not, draw on your peers and support staff who can assist you in the process.
- Be realistic about what you can achieve. Start with simple tasks and work up from there.
- Stick to the plan you have created.
- Make sure you set aside sufficient time to complete the planned professional development. Never underestimate the time it requires as more often than not it will take longer than you anticipated.
- Remember to persevere, even if you don't have success in achieving your goals initially!

Activity:

1. The Facilitator will access the Internet and show some examples of formal and informal learning approaches drawn from the hyperlinks above.
2. In pairs, identify several factors which should be taken into account when researching and identifying a suitable learning approach to further professional development.
3. In pairs, discuss and then summarise in a table the advantages and disadvantages of formal and informal learning approaches.
4. Share your ideas with the entire group in a facilitator-led class discussion.

B] Computer Practical Session (1.5 hours)

Notes to Facilitator
Participants will require access to an Internet-connected computer. The facilitator should be on hand to provide support as required. The facilitator will require knowledge of Web evaluation tools and understand how one would evaluate and verify a resources' credibility prior to the session.

Activity:

Samuel is a high school science teacher. He is in his second year of teaching and wants to gain more knowledge about his subject, particularly innovative ways to use technology in his teaching. Samuel is a very confident and capable ICT user and has extensive ICT skills. He is extremely busy in the afternoons coaching extra-curricular activities so would prefer to choose a learning path that provides more flexibility. The school has offered to pay for the course he selects so cost is not really a factor.

Refer to the case study above in order to answer the following questions. Use the computers at your disposal to conduct any research you might need to further your understanding and aid you in completing this activity. You may use the examples attached here as a starting point.

1. How can Samuel use ICT to achieve his professional development goals? Using a word processor program, create a sample professional development plan which will assist Samuel on his path.
2. Conduct an Internet web search and identify three different learning opportunities that Samuel might explore. In your word processor document, create a matrix and supply the advantages and disadvantages of each option you have identified. Remember to base this on the knowledge you have of Samuel's situation.

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3. Next, identify one option from the three options you selected as your final recommendation. Identify in detail what is covered by this option in terms of costs, accreditation (if any), required knowledge level and access to ICT and capture this in your word document.
4. Verifying the quality of the resource is a vital step in embarking on one's professional development learning path. Review the following learning options and determine if the resource can be deemed credible. Justify each answer with an explanation.
   - ECDL/ICDL For Teachers & Students: http://www.ecdl.org/index.jsp?p=93&n=100.
   - Intel Teach® Elements: Assessment in 21st Century Classrooms: http://www.intel.com/education/video/assess/content.htm.

   You may draw on the following tools to assist you in your evaluation:
   - Website Evaluation Wizard: http://21cif.com/tools/evaluate/.
   - Critical Evaluation Information: http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/eval.html.

C] Self-Study (Total 30 Minutes)

Self-Reflection Activity

You have been in education for a while now and have some experience. So what are your ambitions? Where are you going? Use the space below to map out this path. This is a self-reflective activity so you don't have to share it with anyone. Be honest with yourself also if you have a plan it is more likely to happen.

Two Year Goal	Five Year Goal	Ten Year Goal	Before I Retire
Within 2 years I will …			

Now look at the 2 year goal and consider what Professional Development options might support growth in that direction.

Resources Used in this Lesson Unit

Microsoft. (2011). *Educator Learning Journeys: Technology Literacy Curriculum – Technology Literacy and Your Professional Development.* Available online at https://eljmicrosoft.intuition.com/Rubicon.aspx. Accessed 25/07/2011 (All Rights Reserved).

Balanskat, Anja; Blamire, Roger; Kefala, Stella. (2006). *The ICT Impact Report: A review of studies of ICT impact on schools in Europe.* Available online at http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc254_en.pdf. Accessed 04/08/2011.