Online and Length? Provision and Use of Learning Technologies in Government Schools

Report 2 – May 2001

Background

In 1998 the State Government allocated $80 million to EDWA to fund the provision of a Learning Technologies Project for government schools. Schools were required to achieve a computer to student ratio of 1:5 for secondary students and 1:10 for primary students by 2002.

Once schools have shown that they will be able to meet the target computer to student ratios, they have the flexibility to direct any remaining funding to:

- acquisition of additional hardware and software for students;

- development of school connectivity, including establishment of local area networks and Internet access;

- development of teacher competencies in the use of learning technologies and their integration into the curriculum; and

- provision of technical support for the maintenance of the technologies.

What the examination found...

- Planning and monitoring of the Learning Technologies Project has focussed on computer to student ratios. However, increased numbers of computers has not always translated to increased student access, use or integration into teaching and learning programs in schools.

- EDWA have not determined the full cost of implementation of the project. The focus has been on acquittal of project funding and progress towards achieving ratios.

- Schools are well on track to meet the target computer to student ratios by 2002 with EDWA 2000 census data indicating that 59 per cent of schools already meet these requirements.

- Inadequate accountability and asset management practices were in place in many of the schools reviewed. Compliance with purchasing requirements which ensure value for money could not be demonstrated by 20 per cent of schools.

- Frequent information technology breakdowns and time delays in solving difficulties and repairing faults disrupt lessons and are discouraging teachers from making greater use of learning technologies.

- Ineffective use is made of professional teaching resources, with many schools relying on teachers, on a time-release and voluntary basis, to provide technical support.

In summary what the examination recommended...

Major recommendations made in the report are that:

EDWA revise project planning by:

- placing greater emphasis on applying learning technologies to the school curriculum rather than simply achieving a target computer to student ratio.

EDWA promote more cost effective implementation in schools through:

- monitoring asset management practices in schools to ensure compliance with EDWA policies and Treasurer's Instructions, including those designed to achieve value for money in purchasing; and

- more effective provision of technical support in schools to reduce computer down-time and increase the confidence of teachers to use the technologies with their classes.

EDWA promote effective integration into the curriculum by:

- focusing professional development opportunities on the integration of learning technologies into the curriculum and promoting access to a shared knowledge base of learning technology resources; and

- pursuing strategies to accelerate the integration of learning technologies into the curriculum.