



Report into the current use of Information Communication Technology in Independent Training Providers

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of Employment and Learning Providers

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FOREWORD

The Learning Futures Programme, commissioned and funded by the Education and Training Foundation, has been designed to develop the capacity and capability of the education and training workforce to use learning technologies effectively to improve outcomes for learners and employers.

This report is intended to provide an insight into the current use, and barriers and challenges to use, of Information Communication and Learning Technology (ICLT) in the government funded independent training provider (ITP) sector. It looks at whether ICLT is impacted by:

- Size of provider
- Senior management knowledge of ICLT and its use
- Vision and strategy
- Staff skills
- Availability of resources.

The report concludes with recommendations for future action to improve the use of ICLT across the ITP sector.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ITPs have the opportunity to adjust to change much more quickly than main stream FE if they have the desire to do so. There is some really innovative and embedded practice in pockets across the sector. However, such practice tends to be the work of individuals and is not consistently led by managers or influenced by the financial status, size or type of provision. It is also very evident that there is a sizeable proportion of the sector that is not engaging with technology to enhance the learner journey or improve efficiencies within the organisation.

From the focus groups and survey that AELP undertook as part of this project, providers stated that the biggest barriers to implementing the use of technology were:

- A lack of finance
- The poor ICLT knowledge and skills of staff within the organisation, including senior management
- Lack of available time to commit to ICLT development.

We also found that there was a lack of awareness of free resources and support available to them as well as the return on investment that can be achieved with very little financial outlay.

Many barriers and challenges faced by ICLT adopters and non-adopters are as a result of not having an ICLT strategy that is fit for purpose, or having one at all. A significant number of providers voiced the opinion that without the knowledge of what they need to work towards and the opportunities available it is difficult to write an effective strategy.

The drivers for the increased use of technology need to be more clearly articulated and disseminated for instance how technology can open doors to commercial opportunities, the financial returns on investment and the potential growth of funded provision. Senior managers need targeted support to assist them to develop organisational ICLT vision and strategy in order to enable ITPs and the sector as a whole to move forward.

METHODOLOGY

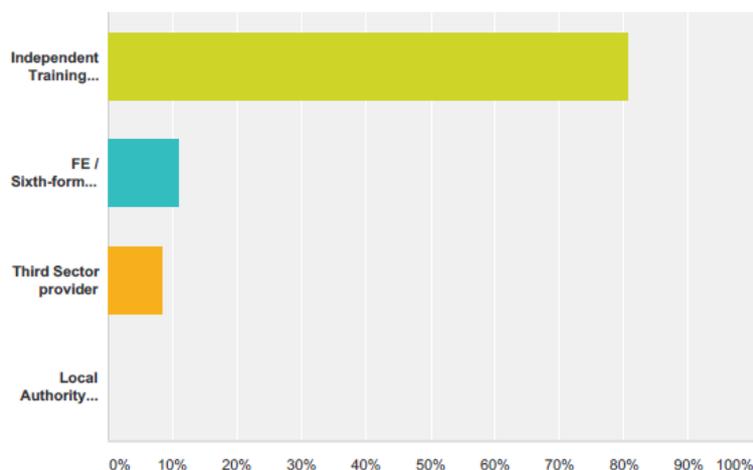
The report draws on research from:

- Outputs of two ITP forums, one morning and one afternoon session, held in London
- AELP membership survey which gathered 31 responses
- One-to-one work with five providers, from a cross section of provision and varying in size, to:
 - Ascertain and analyse their attitudes and strategic approach to ICLT leadership and governance
 - Gain their views and practical application of a variety of free e-tools for content creation, assessment and classroom engagement.
- Experience of the author who supports ITPs in the implementation and development of ILT.

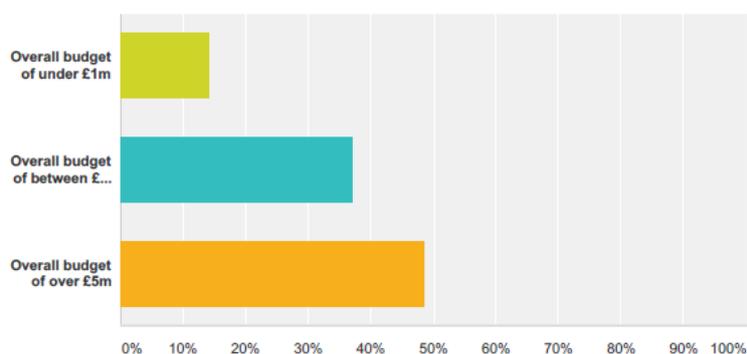
FINDINGS

RESULTS OF SURVEY

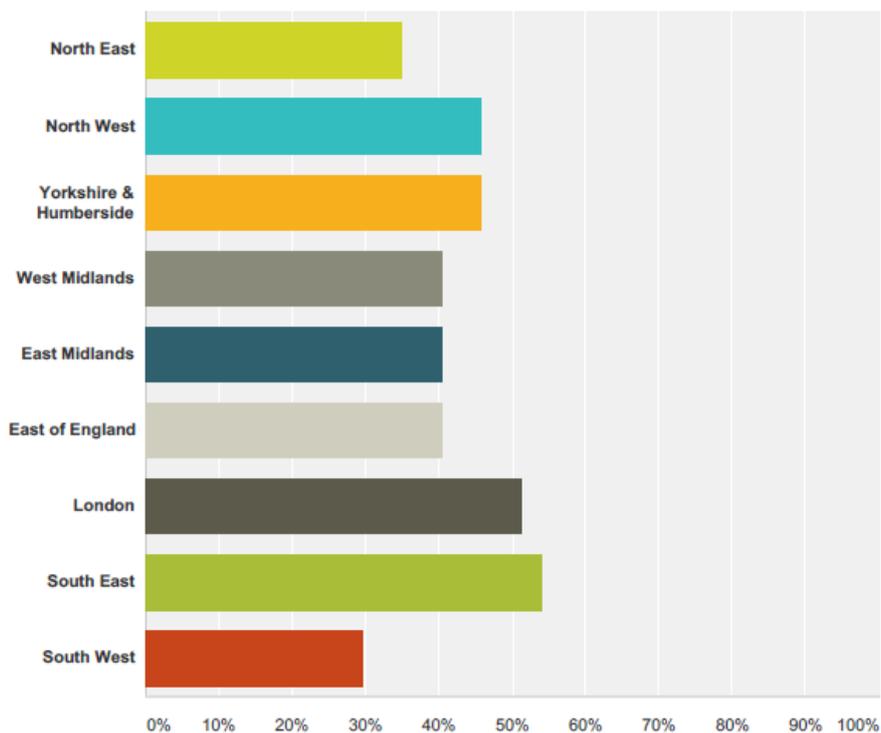
1. Organisation types that took part in the survey



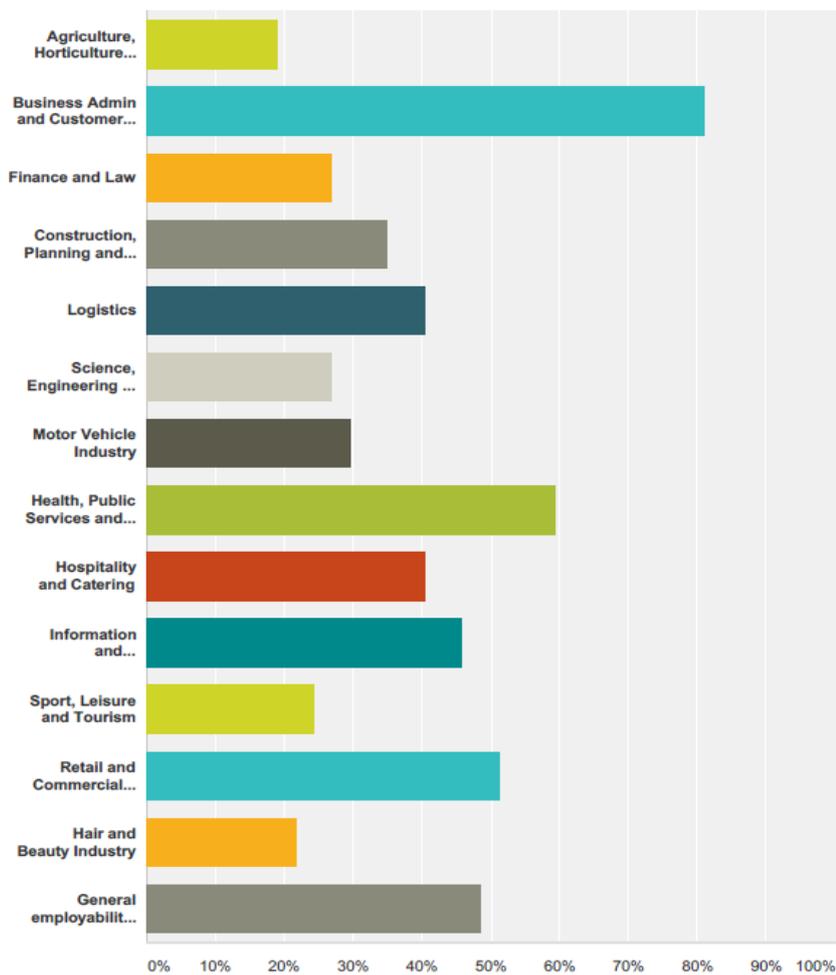
2. Organisations' overall budget



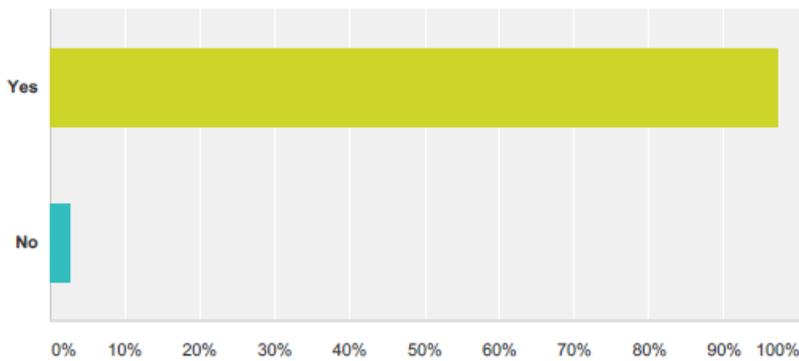
3. Regions organisations are delivering skills training



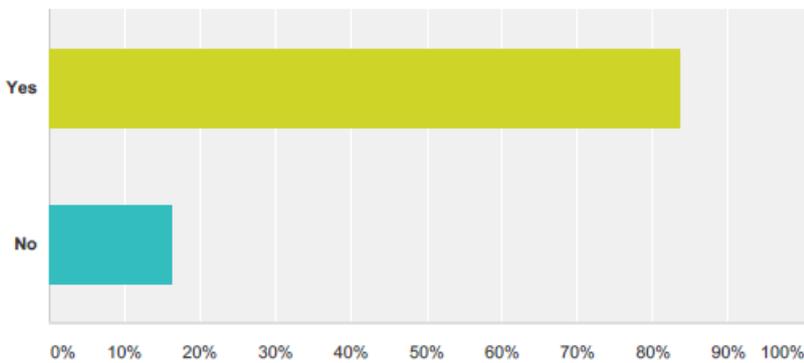
3. Skills sectors being delivered to by the organisations



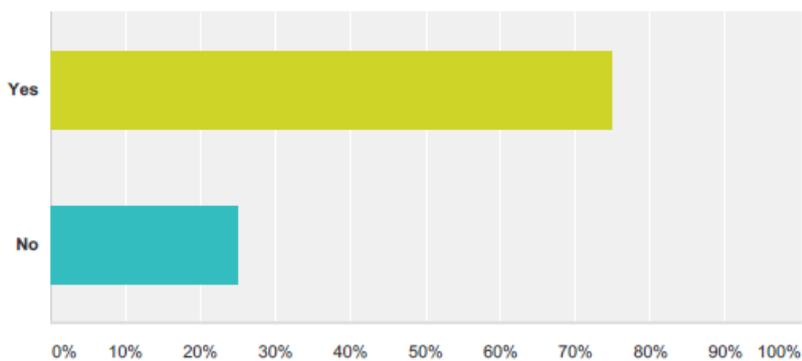
4. Organisations including the use of technology in business objectives



5. Organisations whose staff know how the development of the use of technology is planned to meet business objectives



6. Organisation who have a staff development plan for raising the skills of the workforce in line technology development



7. Technology organisations are currently using for recruitment

Internet	Social Media	Tablets
DBS	HR Database Snowdrop	AVOL portal
Get My First Job portal	MIS system	iTrent – People Manager
Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service	In Touch CRM	PICS
CRM	Recruitment software	BKSB
Anti-virus software	In house bespoke system	iGrasp
Moodle	Sapling MIS	Therefore

8. Technology organisations are currently using for delivery of learning

BKSB materials	e-portfolio	Microsoft Office
Email	Skype	Electronic workbooks
Smartboards	BTOD	Tablets
Moodle	Off the shelf e-learning	Websites
CNC machines	Mechatronics equipment	Robotics
Software simulation	VLE	Prezzie
Interactive PDFs	MyKaplan LMS	Live webinars
City and Guilds Smart Screen	Propeller – web app	Voting systems

9. Technology organisations are currently using for assessment

E-portfolios – various	ForSkills	Tablets
Smart phones	Digital recording	Laptops
Guroo	Promonitor	Markbook
Cloud documentation	BKSB	Sapling MIS

10. Technology organisations are currently using for progress monitoring/management of data/administration and management

E-portfolios – various	Maytas	MIS system
Promonitor	Markbook	Moodle
Own student tracking system	eILP	Online e-tracking solution
Digital reviews	PICS	Frameup
Sapling MIS	Pellcomp	Blogs
Snowdrop	Compass - Proresource, Proactive, Promonitor, ProObserve, Reporting Services, EBS, Goldmine,	In-house databases
Crystal	Zero Accounting	Sharepoint

11. Current Practice

The following practice was identified:

- 55% are using off the shelf e-learning, with packages relating to Functional Skills being the most widely used. A number of the examples given are digital versions of presentations or workbooks;
- 26% are using free resources or tools for creating content. Such use tends to be sporadic and does not always lead to the production of interactive content;
- 62% are using some form of learning management system, with Moodle being the most popular;
- 95% are using e-portfolios, or about to launch them in their organisation;
- 49% are using a customer relationship management system;
- 41% are using one or more mobile apps with learners;
- 89% are making use of social media;
- 98% are using technology for recruitment;
- 100% are using technology for delivery of learning, however in some cases this is a small amount and very basic, such as pdf workbooks;

- 100% are using technology for assessment (e.g e-portfolios), however only 5% are using technology to capture assessments e.g. digital recording, webcams, tablets or smart phones;
- 100% are using technology to monitor learner progress;
- 100% are using technology for MIS.

12. Organisations' main barriers in using technology

- a. Time
- b. Cost of purchasing
- c. Cost of implementation
- d. Staff confidence
- e. Staff development
- f. Compatible platforms
- g. Too many external systems
- h. Reliable and strong internet connection
- i. Lack of knowledge of what's available
- j. Getting data out of systems
- k. Integration of systems
- l. Lack of wifi connection
- m. Learner preference for face to face methods
- n. Employers wanting traditional methods
- o. Training staff how to integrate technology into training sessions
- p. Low IT skills of staff
- q. Data protection
- r. Fear of change
- s. Staff negative preconceptions
- t. Inability to upload information online due to slow broadband
- u. Wet signatures being required for compliance

13. Organisations' support requirements

- a. None or not sure if we need further support
- b. Developing a robust strategy that will stand up in a climate of constant change
- c. Hard to know what we don't know
- d. Demonstration on how different systems can benefit our organisation
- e. Staff development in use of technology e.g. tablets and mobile apps and how to use technology effectively
- f. The creation of a very good Training Provider ICT Assessment toolkit that enables providers to compare themselves against the very best in the business
- g. To be made aware of current practice and opportunities for development
- h. Time to release a dedicated team member for development and share best practice
- i. Advice on where to invest
- j. Advice from an impartial expert on what is possible – have worked with JISC but the support doesn't really work for a national organisation
- k. Support on creating a strategy for national use of webinar software, including what needs to be developed, training requirements, policies and use of resources
- l. Advice on cost v benefits
- m. Funded solutions
- n. Research into what learners and employers actually want from technology in their learning
- o. IT qualification which is about training and assessment delivery relevant to the work role
- p. Staff training for the SMT in the role of technology and how to unlock it



SURVEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

We conclude from the results of the survey that the majority of responses have come from those ITPs that are already engaged in ICLT, rather than the significant element of the sector that have not engaged at all.

The use of technology for recruitment, management information, initial assessment and summative assessment is widely used, but not consistently or effectively used for induction, delivery of learning and interim assessment. This conclusion is based on the lack of interactive and varied content being used for these aspects of provision, which is also evidenced in other aspects of the research.

There is strong evidence for the need for staff development relating to awareness of current technology and what it can be used for in work based learning provision. Staff need support both to develop the skills to utilise learning technologies and to understand the pedagogy required to deliver an effective blended model of provision. Training is also required for SMTs relating to strategy, awareness of available technology, opportunities for cost and time efficiencies and business development, enhanced learner engagement and change management.

Recommendations

1. A training programme for staff that not only provides awareness of available free technology for use in work based learning, but also commercially available ICLT that can enhance provision. The programme needs to include the required pedagogical skills to deliver blended learning and assessment as well as practical training in the use of ICLT. Examples of practice should be backed up with case studies that exemplify effective use of ICLT within ITPs.
2. A training programme for SMTs to raise awareness of ICLT opportunities, business planning objectives, developing a strategy and staff development plan.
3. Adoption of a new ICLT skills scan and qualification for the work based learning sector that will develop, test and reward the knowledge and skills of practitioners working in the sector.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The survey results tell us that the majority of ITP senior management teams (SMTs) obviously have an awareness of the drivers for using ICLT, and understand the importance of including its development in business planning. 97% said that the use of technology is included in business objectives, but 16% of these providers do not pass these objectives down to the staff. We believe that this is not a true reflection of the whole sector, but representative of the proportion that have made significant progress with technology.

In workshops held over the last 12 months, with approximately 15 to 20 delegates in each, 20% indicated that they were aware of their organisation's business objectives for the use of technology. Bellis Training, one of the five providers we worked with as part of this research, is typical of small providers, with up to 50 staff, who say they

'SMT has a lack of awareness of what's available and what is expected of them, making progress difficult.'

do include ICLT objectives in business planning. However, these objectives are very broad due to a lack of understanding by SMT of what they are aiming for, and how they intend to get there. Examples given by Bellis Training were ‘clear action planning for ICT development within learning and training programmes’ and ‘embedding the use of technology in employability skills’. Bellis said that the SMT have a lack of awareness of what learning technologies are currently available and what is expected of them to engage with this agenda, making progress difficult. Another small provider, Develop EBP, does not have any technology related business objectives, but has recently drawn up an ICT strategy. Their main barrier to moving forwards is the lack of ICT strategic knowledge in the organisation, which we believe is a common barrier to progress in many providers.

One of the big challenges for those supporting the ITP sector is the wide variety of types of provider and models of provision. A good example of a provider who has a very different model is the Avant Partnership who extensively manage partnerships, with sub-contractors delivering Traineeships, Apprenticeships and wider Adult Skills funded provision. Avant employs eleven staff and has only 30 direct funded learners at any one time; however they sub-contract 500 learners to other ITPs. Avant’s staff are confident in their use of ICT and the company is in a fortunate position of having sufficient finances to fund hardware and software implementation in line with their business objectives and ICLT strategy. The challenge for their SMT is bringing the ITPs in their partnership with them on the journey of developing the use of ICLT, as most of them do not use technology across their organisations. It has been an on-going problem for JISC and other agencies to support those ITPs who are not directly funded, but have a significant impact on learner outcomes. Historically agencies have based their target support on Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding allocation data; however this does not include the names of sub-contracted providers, many of which are ITPs. This data is available in the form of the List of Declared Subcontractors, which lists 1550 providers, 400 of which have an SFA contract as well as being sub-contracted by another contract holder. This means that there are 1150 providers who are not directly supported by external agencies. We recommend that these providers, who have a significant impact on learner outcomes, are taken into consideration in any ITP support strategy.

We found during the forum, talking to providers and from our experience of working with ITPs that quality assurance of the use of ICLT is often overlooked or not managed well. Together with having a vision and strategy, quality assurance requires knowledge of what good practice looks like and how it is best implemented and applied to a business. However, ITPs generally find it difficult to take on board practice at an organisation that is different to theirs, e.g. a college, and see how it can be applied to their own business.

A lack of finance has come out strongly during this research as one of the top challenges experienced by ITPs. They are also feeling under pressure to make financial savings across provision, as was found by the City and Guilds Techno-Logic – Using Technology to Improve Efficiency survey; which stated that of 118 respondents 46% felt under pressure to make financial savings. This pressure to save money has been a driver for the some providers to invest in technology to reap the financial benefits in the medium to long term. However, many of providers, often the smaller ones, have barriers to making this investment; either they say they can’t afford it or they do not have the awareness of the potential of technology to bring cost efficiencies to their business.

In the smaller providers, as well as in some FE colleges, when money has been spent on ICLT it has quite often been based on a ‘trend’ and has not formed part of a longer term strategic plan. This has meant that hardware and software has become redundant, either because

‘We require advice, guidance and support to develop a robust strategy that will stand up in a climate of constant change.’

it's been replaced by something better or it's not liked by staff and is left in a cupboard. This has made senior managers and finance directors fearful of not being able to future proof their business, which comes down to a lack of ICLT knowledge. The AELP survey found a lack of understanding and experience of management of data, compatibility across platforms, internet connections, learning management systems and what to look for in any new development such as e-portfolios and the use of mobile technology, all of which hinder progress. It is from this knowledge that business objectives can be identified and strategies developed. One provider in the survey said that the support they require is 'advice, guidance and support to develop a robust strategy that will stand up in a climate of constant change'. Although few others put strategy as a priority for support, we would suggest that the needs they identified could all relate to the fact that their strategy is not fit for purpose.

The survey also highlighted that when SMTs have invested in hardware and software staff are given some training on its use, but not trained or supported to change their pedagogical practices to be able to confidently deliver, assess and support learners online. There seems to be an expectation by SMTs that staff will 'pick up' how to plan and deliver a blended model of provision. Those who are delivering confidently online are generally those who are confident ICLT users who are prepared to give it a go and sort out the challenges they face as they progress.



LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE SUMMARY

The report highlights a strategic deficit across the ITP sector. The evidence shows that while ITPs may locate certain tactical ICLT elements in their business objectives, the absence of capacity to build based on a cost effective technology solution is one of the most significant challenges for anyone seeking to support development in the sector. The findings challenge policy makers to address this strategic deficit through a more coordinated approach that actively encourages the sharing of vision and practice across small and medium sized organisations.

It is clear that many of the barriers to implementing or developing effective use of ICLT are down to the lack of the knowledge and understanding of SMTs who fail to see the opportunities, cost efficiencies, and other benefits that technology can bring to their provision. There is also a lack of understanding of how technology is used effectively in work based learning and the skills that staff require to successfully embed learning technologies into provision.

Although more apparent in the smaller and sub-contracted providers, the research has shown that it is not exclusively these providers where SMTs require a more comprehensive understanding of ICLT use and implementation.

The research has found that ICLT strategies are either non-existent or insufficiently robust to provide identifiable objectives for successful implementation or development. Quality assurance (QA) is often overlooked or ICLT QA is not embedded into QA procedures.

The 1150 sub-contracted providers, who do not hold an SFA contract, cause a challenge for supporting agencies. Many of the previous structures and methods of support have not included or met the needs of these providers.

Finance to fund the purchase of hardware and software is a real issue for many providers. As there is unlikely to be capital funding available innovative, free methods of ICLT development are required to provide solutions for providers.

Recommendations

1. A training programme for SMTs to raise awareness of ICLT opportunities, business planning objectives, and how to develop a strategy and staff development plan. Strategy development to include clear objectives and corresponding action plans which staff are supported to take ownership of. It is critical that the strategy takes into consideration how SMT will enable staff to carry out CPD and plan and develop a blended model of delivery. One of the biggest challenges that staff have is finding the time to develop their skills and build an online environment that will be hugely beneficial both to learners and to the organisation as a whole. At present this appears to be an unachievable mountain to climb and, unless plans are put in place to address this, will remain so for the foreseeable future.
2. All ICLT support to include sub-contracted providers.
3. Any training programme to take account of the difference in provider types and to accommodate small, sub-contracted and national providers.
4. Any training programme to take account of the financial situation that many providers find themselves in by providing free and inexpensive solutions to embracing ICLT.

CURRENT PRACTICE

The research forum evidenced examples of how the large providers, and those smaller wealthier providers, are using a wide range of technology including e-portfolios, off-the shelf e-learning, hardware to complete and track remote assessments, webinars for delivering live training, tablets for apprentice reviews, mobile apps, an LMS, a range of e-tools for in-house content creation and in one case augmented reality.

The lack of innovation in pedagogy is a key factor emerging from the report. Too much of technology use is ad hoc, particularly within smaller providers. There appears to be little support for more radical innovation in the training sector around such emerging concepts as the flipped classroom and the online blended learning dividend in delivery. Policy makers need to consider where the innovation in pedagogy that is more evident in some progressive colleges might be used to impact on practice in ITPs.

‘We moved from paper based portfolios to electronic portfolios, and this change enabled a 5 learner per assessor increase in caseload which reduced overheads, and increased learner engagement and progression rates’. IQA’s also have hugely reduced the amount of travel they need to do as all sampling can be completed online.’

Where innovation is taking place it is often the work of inspired and confident individuals rather than the results of a whole organisation strategic approach. Good practice does not appear to be coordinated and shared across ITPs.

Many of those providers who are engaging with technology have developed a culture of innovation, whereby staff are encouraged to try new ways of doing things and to embrace change. Where staff are confident to try new e-tools, gadgets and different ways of working it is clear that a range of ICLT is used and there have been positive outcomes. One national provider who participated in the research said ‘we moved from paper based portfolios to electronic portfolios, and this change enabled a 5 learner per assessor increase in caseload which reduced overheads, and increased learner engagement

and progression rates. IQA's also have hugely reduced the amount of travel they need to do as all sampling can be completed online.'

One barrier to ITPs implementing or developing their blended offer is a lack of awareness of what is available to them, either free or at a low cost. During the forum providers were not aware of the e-tools demonstrated to them. This was the same case with survey respondents as only 20% are using any type of free e-tool for resource creation, and of these some said they were used by sporadically by a few individuals. .

It appears that few providers have a fully integrated system, which includes functionality such as CRM for recruitment, individual learning plans, reviews, progress tracking, LMS, e-portfolio and management information. We would suggest that this is because there are few systems available that are appropriate for ITPs' or are perceived as expensive. Where providers have implemented an integrated system it has usually meant a bespoke system built by consultants or, as with the large providers, their IT team has identified their need and built an in-house bespoke system. As a result of this ITPs are choosing a different solution for each single element of their provision, such as an e-portfolio, and then find that it doesn't integrate with their MIS, meaning additional manual administration. One medium sized provider at the forum, spent a few hundred thousand pounds putting in a fully integrated system so that all elements of provision could talk to one another. The provider is already seeing that they will get a good return on their investment. The advantage they have is that their MD has an excellent ICLT knowledge and understanding, and they have in-house IT technical experts.

The areas of provision that the ITP sector as a whole is making good use of technology are:

- MIS for managing learner data which has mainly been driven by the requirements for the submission of claims to the SFA;
- E-portfolios for assessment, which has mainly been driven by the awarding organisations and Ofsted;
- CRM or database for recruitment which we would suggest is driven by the need to manage a large amount of data efficiently and Ofsted.

The areas of provision that the ITP sector is sporadically making good use of technology are:

- Online learning – although all providers in the survey said they were using some form of technology for delivery of learning, the survey, forum providers and our experience tells us that this content lacks interaction and does not engage the end user. At worst copies of hand-outs are sent out electronically to learners or presentations, delivered in the classroom, are uploaded as they are to an online repository;
- Technology enabled assessment – a surprisingly small proportion of providers in the survey said that they are using smart phones and tablets for assessment. Those that are said they found this approach very effective.

There was little evidence throughout the research to indicate that learning was being formally planned and recorded to include ICLT. During workshops discussions about Ofsted requirements for planning learning, not one delegate said that learning plans included online delivery. Our experience is that this is because ITP staff do not know how to plan blended learning.

There are differences in practice between providers delivering the main-stream occupational areas such as Business Administration and Customer Service and those delivering more technical occupational areas such as engineering and mechanics. Although this may not be evident across the whole ITP sector, providers taking part in this research certainly seemed to be more innovative with

online content when delivering the more technical subjects. A contributory factor to better innovation and creative thinking in the technical subjects could be that these apprenticeships are far more valuable, from the point of view of funding, and therefore the providers have more opportunity to invest in technology.

The presumption that office based apprentices and those with large employers have better access to online resources is not always accurate, due to company security and restrictions on the use of devices. However, staff delivering office based apprenticeships are more likely to try webinars and Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) for delivery and assessment.

As yet we haven't really seen employers driving the use of learning technologies, despite evidence that 80% of employers say that e-learning provides a uniquely accessible, flexible and cost-effective method of delivering training, ([Towards Maturity Technology Boosts Workplace Skills Report](#)). As more employers use technology to drive business efficiencies it is more likely that they will have an expectation of its use to deliver and assess learning.



CURRENT PRACTICE SUMMARY

The lack of innovation in pedagogy is a factor emerging from the report. Too much of technology use is ad hoc, particularly with small providers. There appears to be little support for more radical innovation in the ITP sector around such concepts as the flipped classroom and the delivery of online blended learning. Policy makers need to consider, for example, how the innovative approaches evident in some of the more progressive colleges could be used to impact on the practice of ITPs.

Where innovation is taking place it is often the work of inspired and confident individuals rather than the impact of a whole organisation approach, underpinned by a clearly defined and shared strategy. Good practice does not appear to be coordinated and shared across ITPs.

There is a lack of awareness of what ICLT is available, either free or at a low cost.

It appears there is a lack of awareness or availability of fully integrated ICLT systems that track the learner journey, delivery of learning, recording of assessment and that automatically feed into a management information system.

Those that are using online learning are not sufficiently making use of varied learning activities to engage learners. Many resources in use are not interactive or are very text based. In addition staff using online resources are not building these into their learning plans if they have them, and therefore not accounting for their contribution to guided learning hours.

The research has found that providers who are more innovative with online content are often delivering the more technical subjects, which could be down to the value of these apprenticeships enabling a higher ICLT budget.

Recommendations

1. A training programme to make ITPs aware of the range of free online platforms, e-tools for content creation and off-the shelf content, and how they can be used.
2. Case studies on current practice to be created and shared across the sector and used in any ICLT training programmes.

3. Research to be undertaken to establish the extent and technical specifications of integrated management information systems that are suitable for ITP provision.
4. A training programme that teaches ITP staff how to plan a blended model of delivery.

USE OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES

We found that providers have a lack awareness of digital resources that are freely available. There was no knowledge of:

- The JISC service Jorum (which is being closed and an alternative established);
- The outputs of innovation projects from the last five years that include significant online content that would be beneficial to the ITP sector;
- Online content hosted on the Excellence Gateway;
- JISC Regional Support Centre resources on regional Moodle sites (currently being restructured).

Providers also lack awareness of free online and downloadable tools for content creation and online communication. This was particularly highlighted during the research forum and in the follow up one to one work with providers. Raising providers' awareness of a range of free e-tools, (see Appendix 1), asking them to trial them and obtain staff feedback provided some really positive outcomes. Feedback on the range of e-tools included the following:

- We have seen first-hand how successful these tools can be;
- Learners enjoyed using the outputs of Kahoot;
- Staff were able to record the results of assessment instantaneously which saved time on marking individual work;
- These tools will enable us to achieve our objective of establishing effective and efficient incorporation of ILT in all directly delivered provision;
- Flipsnack could assist the organisation's objectives of getting information about the Traineeship course out to prospective learners;
- Staff will now use Nearpod on a regular basis;
- Using iSpring 7 we would be able to remotely provide our presentations and improve quality;
- All staff who have used Nearpod had a use for it and students enjoyed the interaction;
- Zaption will enable us to utilise existing videos on a range of platforms and make them into an interactive learning experience;
- We can see where the tools can enhance the learning experience for our learners;
- Free e-tools give staff an opportunity to develop their skills and reach to a wider audience online;
- We are heavily reliant on paper so these free e-tools will help us step towards ICT in a more positive way.

One national provider who participated in the additional one to one support had a completely different view of the value of the free e-tools for his organisation. Although teachers liked using a couple of them it was felt that they would be restricted as to which ones they could use, due to a perceived security risk of free software.

There was a general feeling from some providers that they would be prepared to purchase some core online content for qualifications; however they said that what they had found had not been

appropriate for their learners, or did not adequately meet the qualification criteria. Others said that they hadn't come across any online content that would meet their requirements.



USE OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES SUMMARY

There is a lack awareness of digital resources that are freely available, free e-tools for content creation and free cloud applications to enhance many other aspects of work based learning such as, CRM systems, digital marketing aids, recruitment management and communication tools.

From the free tools that were trialled Kahoot and Nearpod were found to be the most useful for learner engagement and ease of use. The other tools all received positive feedback and produced ideas for use in various aspects of provision.

Recommendations

1. The development of a single national online portal for digital resources, links to free cloud based applications and free content creation software for use across provision. To include case studies and examples of planned blended learning, ICLT strategies, ICLT business objectives, vocational area ICLT action plans, staff ICLT development plans and models for on-going staff development and celebrating achievements.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

General observations, combined with outcomes from the research, show that where the use of technology is lacking it is mainly due to limited awareness and understanding of technology and how it can benefit ITPs. We found that this is more often the case in smaller providers.

During the research the majority of ITPS expressed the following as challenges:

- Lack of time for staff professional development;
- Lack of staff confidence in the use of ICLT;
- Lack of staff time to plan and develop blended learning models;
- Having the capital to invest in ICLT.

Other challenges expressed by ITPs included:

- Staff being afraid of change;
- Lack of awareness of the availability of free e-tools for creating content and off-the shelf e-learning;
- Having a fully compatible MIS system that collates data for the whole learner journey;
- Learners having devices that are not compatible with the provider's content;
- Specific industry restrictions on the use of ICLT (this is sometimes over played due to lack of appetite for using ICLT);
- Apprentices unable to use their own devices in the workplace;
- Provider staff prohibited from using their own devices in apprentices workplaces;
- Availability of an internet connection at rural apprentices workplaces;
- Lack of understanding and awareness of what Ofsted inspectors are looking for and expecting with regard to the use of ICLT;

- Lack of a unified approach to developing a blended model of provision resulting in staff doing 'bits and pieces' as they see fit.

Specific challenges to large or national providers are:

- Robust system security meaning approval is required for any new use of hardware and software installation. Free e-tools are usually banned and staff are unable to install software on their own devices without permission. This inhibits innovation and staff ability to try out new things;
- Availability of a good internet connection at all training venues to allow consistent use of learner and provider devices.

Specific challenges to smaller providers are:

- Senior managers who lack ICLT knowledge, understanding and experience (although the survey did not show this, we know this is not exclusive to small providers);
- Not having the pool of staff to identify one or more ICLT champions, or an individual with the relevant expertise to encourage other staff and drive change.

‘Technology is not fully understood by our management team.’



BUSINESS CHALLENGES SUMMARY

The biggest challenges in the development of ICLT are a lack of time, money, staff skills and confidence, and SMT and staff poor ICLT knowledge and understanding.

It is also evident that there is frequently sporadic ICLT development with little unified approach within an organisation, and inconsistent internet access across regions served by ITPs.

Recommendations

1. An online ICLT training programme for practitioners as described previously to be initiated with a face to face workshop to introduce the programme and its content, and to provide practical ICLT opportunities and demonstrations.
2. An online ICLT strategic training programme for SMT, as described previously, to be initiated with a face to face workshop to introduce the programme and its content, and to provide practical ICLT opportunities and demonstrations.

SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

Commonly expressed support requirements included:

- Consultancy services/industry expert on the effective use of IT, and development and advancements in available technology;

- Support to find out what ICLT will benefit our organisation;
- On-going sustainable ICLT training and support, in particular to use software available for online content creation;
- Staff development in using online platforms for making online resources available to learners and also online tools for delivering training to remote learners;
- Staff development in how to integrate ICLT into delivery plans, e.g. use of mobile apps;
- Information and demonstrations on best practice including what learning technology experts are doing;
- Advice, guidance and support to develop an ICLT strategy;
- Funding to invest in new equipment.

Other support requirements mentioned were:

- A graduate programme, similar to the Maths initiative would be helpful;
- Where to begin, as it's difficult to say what we require when we don't know what we should know;
- Connectivity issues.

The suggested graduate programme was an interesting proposal, which was based on the fact that the provider had hosted a maths graduate to support learners' maths Functional Skills development. This had been a very successful initiative; however applying this to ICLT would not be as straightforward due to the different knowledge and skill requirements. A few years ago a supported provider employed a graduate to collaborate with staff to build their Moodle LMS. Unfortunately this did not work due to the lack of understanding of work based learning by a non-teaching IT techy, and staff not taking any ownership for the content being developed.



SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY

The majority of providers who took part in our research expressed the requirement for staff ICLT training to raise awareness and understanding of ICLT that would be beneficial in work based learning, and to raise staff skills in the use of ICLT. Developing an ICLT strategy was also a popular support requirement, along with being provided with examples of good practice.

Recommendations as previously recorded

RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVES

1. All ITPS to have an ICLT strategy with clear objectives and corresponding action plans which staff are supported to take ownership of. It is critical that the strategy takes into consideration how SMTs will enable staff to carry out CPD and plan and develop a blended model of delivery. One of the biggest challenges that staff have is finding the time to develop their skills and to build an online environment will be hugely beneficial to learners and t the organisation as a whole.

2. All ICLT support to include sub-contracted providers.
3. All ITP staff to have a good understanding of what their organisational ICLT objectives are and how they will be achieved.
4. All ITP staff, including SMTs, to have a good awareness of how ICLT can benefit ITP provision, what has been proved to work and how to embed good practice in work based learning.
5. All ITP staff to have a professional development plan that reflects the skills required to meet the objectives of the ICLT strategy appropriate to their role.
6. All ITP staff to receive CPD on how to plan and deliver a blended model of provision.
7. All ITPS to be made aware of the range of free online platforms, e-tools for content creation and off-the shelf content, and how they can be used.
8. All ITP staff to be aware of Ofsted's expectations of their use of technology.
9. All ITPS to have a good understanding of the financial benefits of using technology as well as the benefits to learners.
10. All ITPs to be aware of the commercial opportunities when using ICLT.
11. Development of blended learning proficiency standards, including pedagogical skills to deliver and assess online, that reflect good practice for which practitioners can be rewarded with open badges.
12. Development of an ICLT skills scan which links to the blended learning proficiency standards that can be accessed by all ITP staff.
13. Blended learning proficiency standards to be incorporated into a new qualification appropriate for the work based learning sector that will develop, test and reward the knowledge and skills of practitioners working in the sector.
14. A training programme for ITP practitioners that takes account of the difference in provider types and that is appropriate for small, sub-contracted and national providers. The training needs to provide awareness of available free technology for use in work based learning and commercially available ICLT that can enhance provision. Practitioners need practical training in using ICLT across the provision and to be supported to develop the pedagogical skills to deliver blended learning and assessment. Examples of practice to be backed up with case studies.
15. An ICLT strategic training programme for SMTs that takes account of the difference in provider types and that is appropriate for small, sub-contracted and national providers. The training will raise awareness of ICLT opportunities, business planning objectives, and will outline how to develop an effective strategy and staff development plan.
16. The development of a single national online portal for digital resources, links to free cloud based applications and free content creation software for use across provision. To also include case studies and examples of planned blended learning, ICLT strategies, ICLT business objectives, vocational area ICLT action plans, staff ICLT development plans and models for on-going staff development and celebrating achievements.
17. Case studies on current practice to be created and shared across the sector and used in any ICLT training programmes.
18. Research to be undertaken to establish the extent and technical specifications of integrated management information systems that are suitable for ITPs' provision.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

❖ Development of a senior management strategic training programme:

- Covering:
 - Identifying ICLT strategic objectives – raising awareness of good practice, the business opportunities, financial benefits, learner and staff benefits, Ofsted expectations, options for blended models of delivery, identifying the ICLT opportunities in their vocational areas, availability of what's free, the staff skills

- required, developing blended learning plans, staff development models that have worked, quality assurance requirements;
 - Production of an ICLT strategy;
 - Action planning to achieve strategic objectives;
 - Linking ICLT strategic objectives to staff appraisal.

- Consisting of:
 - Face to face workshop;
 - Online programme;
 - Evidence requirement that demonstrates the delegates knowledge and understanding, as well as practical implementation and development e.g. ICLT strategy, action plan and progress monitoring.

- ❖ Development of a train the ICLT expert trainer programme:
 - Covering:
 - How to identify and plan an appropriate organisational online model of delivery;
 - How to plan and evidence effective blended learning delivery at curriculum level using programme schemes and unit plans;
 - Availability of free online platforms, e-tools for content creation and off-the shelf content;
 - How to create digital content using free e-tools to meet requirements of the curriculum scheme and unit plans;
 - How to effectively deliver learning, and assess and support learners in the workplace as well as in the classroom;
 - How to effectively deliver live online training sessions to learners in the workplace;
 - How to engage learners in online communication;
 - How to encourage peer to peer support online;
 - Using technology for face to face and remote observational, evidenced and verbal assessment.

 - Consisting of:
 - Face to face workshop;
 - Online programme;
 - Evidence requirement that demonstrates the delegates knowledge and understanding, as well as practical implementation and development e.g. blended learning programme schedule and unit planning, online badges of achievement indicating blended learning proficiency level.

SUMMARY

There are providers in the sector who are achieving positive outcomes through the implementation of innovative ICLT practice, which is embedded across the organisation. This practice often creates a real culture of innovation that motivates staff to embrace ICLT for the good of learning. However, such practice is not widespread across the sector. The use of ICLT is frequently down to the keenness of individuals to use technology and is not consistently led by managers or influenced by the financial

status, size or type of provision. A positive and effective ICLT culture is only achieved where it is driven by the senior management team and where there is a clear ICLT strategy that is working for and across the organisation.

It is very evident that there is a sizeable proportion of the sector that is not engaging with technology for learning at all. This was further demonstrated at the AELP national conference where, during two blended learning workshops with around 40 providers in each, fewer than 20% of attendees said they are using some form of blended learning.

An effective ICLT strategy is fundamental to the success of an organisation moving forward with their ICLT implementation and development. The strategy can only be successful if the senior management have a good awareness and understanding of what they are trying to achieve, not just theoretically but what it actually looks like on the ground.

The sustainable approach to implementing an ICLT strategy, and continuing to build a dynamic learning environment for learners, is to:

- Use free e-tools and online platforms wherever possible;
- Ensure staff take responsibility for course planning and development in line with organisational plans;
- Ensure staff have the skills to be able to personalise learning by creating online content;
- Develop an organisational culture of building the delivery of online learning and assessment skills on an on-going basis;
- Develop an organisational culture where the use of technology is seen as the norm and 'the way we do things' in the eyes of staff, learners and employers.

There are many challenges in supporting and training the sector:

- It's diversity and the fact that staff are not always very good at taking examples of practice from other sectors and applying it to their own;
- The number and range of funded providers;
- The delivery chain, whereby one funded provider might be working with many subcontractors who are not themselves directly funded. Historically support has not been widely available to providers who are not directly funded, but training and support should reach these providers as they are significantly contributing to funded outcomes;
- Opportunities for time 'off-the job' for staff to access CPD are limited making it difficult to design and deliver a training and support package that is readily adopted by the sector.

APPENDIX 1

FREE E-TOOLS TRIALLED BY ITPS AND THEIR FEEDBACK

Flipsnack	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Really enjoyed using this because I was able to convert a PowerPoint into a 'flip' book which looked really professional and now the Centre Manager will send the link out to schools so they can learn more about what we do.2. Flipsnack is useful with workbooks that staff have written. I think they would be used more if the learners could actually write or type in the booklet, so the actual document has read/write facility.
BB Flashback	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Could record my screen. This is an excellent tool for when I get a tablet laptop.2. We used BB Flashback to create a short video demonstrating how to carry out a spreadsheet activity. After watching the demo video it was very simple to make a recording. However, on our version we were not able to add text boxes but this is a minor technical problem and will look into this more. This software would definitely be useful for IT tutors in our centre.
Nearpod	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We found Nearpod good for making interactive presentations and assessment however quite time consuming. We had been able to upload videos and images along with notes to support teach and then devise a number of quizzes for assessment to check understanding. It was also easy to link to external site for additional resources. Learners were able to use their own devices to access the system and enjoyed the whole interactive experience. Staff found the teacher administration screens useful as they were able to monitor who was accessing the resources and then record the results of the assessments.2. NearPod was harder to set up than Kahoot! Therefore would not use it again.3. Really good for quizzes. Has a good interactive element. Could convert presentations into live sessions. It is available as an app so the students can have it on their phones. You can upload image, video and type text on it so it's a multi-discipline resource.4. Nearpod is great. This is a keeper. Everyone who has seen and used Nearpod has a use for it. Three teaching staff have actually used this in class for formative assessment. All the students enjoyed the interaction and the student report facility within the software is great.
Thinglink	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. As it can be shared across the range of social media platforms, it could also assist the organisation's objectives of getting information about the Traineeship course out to prospective learners. The initial "Thinglink" image could be an advertisement for the Traineeship programme, and then hotspots could link to information about the programme, interviews with past learners about what they have achieved on the programme, information about vacancies and anything else relevant2. Uploaded useful videos from YouTube that students could watch to educate them. Also found some more resources on the site that other users had done. Could use it to create a 'hotspot' which has an embedded video from YouTube or a web link.

Zaption	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zaption will enable us to utilise existing videos on a range of platforms. We will be able to refresh our existing lesson plans and SOW and make them into an interactive learning experience. The option to add quizzes and live discussions will make the sessions more engaging and the analytics for teachers should save time with making and assessments. 2. Really enjoyed using Zaption because could create a video which could be uploaded directly onto YouTube. Also could use it with Moodle when it is up and running to embed resources
iSpring7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Really good for converting PowerPoint presentations into flash or HTML and displayed on mobile devices also. 2. Good for providing interactive learning content to remote users. Some of our PowerPoint presentations are animations of electro/mechanical subjects. Being able to provide these remotely would improve quality and the learners' experience. Creating online lecturers / presentation is a possibility, certainly for candidates who are unable to attend our centre due to working away for example.
ManyCam	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very good for live video and audio effects but will have to set aside the time to explore it. The students will enjoy using it for presentations.

ITP RESPONSE TO 'DO YOU THINK THAT THE USE OF FREE SOFTWARE COULD ENABLE GROWTH IN YOUR ORGANISATION?'

1. The programs we have looked at recently have all been shown to have relevance and we can see where they can enhance the learning experience for our learners. It is important that we are exposed to new software. Being free would make it more attractive, but what is more important is how it can improve classroom learning and participation.
2. The risks with free software are security of data and advertising.
3. It will add further strings to our bows in terms of creating resources. At the moment we are heavily reliant on paper resources so this will help us step towards ICT in a more positive way.
4. It will give staff an opportunity to develop their skills and reach a wider audience online.

APPENDIX 2 AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Carolyn Lewis is a work based learning consultant specialising in the application of information, communication and learning technologies in the post 16 sector. Prior to starting her own companies, Vocational Innovation Ltd and the Elearning Marketplace Ltd, Carolyn spent over 20 years' in the FE and Skills sector where she combined her experience of the management of government funded programmes, quality assurance as an external verifier and her IT experience in the private sector, with her passion for developing innovative approaches to delivering work based learning. Carolyn managed the JISC remit for supporting the work based learning sector in England and Wales and she was also Projector Director of the £2 million London Assessor project, which trained and qualified over 600 individuals to join the work based learning sector in London. In the past few years Carolyn has been leading a variety of projects and working with numerous training providers to enhance and bring efficiencies to their provision through the use of innovative solutions.