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An edtech professional development initiative that worked

In the context of edtech professional development programmes, I recall a major initiative I was lucky enough to take a major lead in and that was extremely well received, until we hit austerity was pulled by government. The initiative was related to the Functional Skills in core subjects Maths, English, Science and ICT. Whilst the FS programme was launched nationally, a national programme of FS in curriculum subjects was being developed. I was the Lead for the ICT strand.

Each LEAD spent about a year working with nationally recognised curriculum subject leaders, reps from subject associations and innovators in subject areas. We worked with hardware and subject specialists to gather intelligence on messages they were picking up from schools as well contemporary research. The outcome demonstrated how ICT not only could enhance the teaching of the subject but facilitate effectively elements of subject teaching that traditionally teachers identified were difficult for students to grasp. A similar approach was taken by English Maths and Science and there were areas in which several of the strands might be drawn together eg effective use of ICT modelling using mathematically derived data to solve a geographical problem eg river flow rates in differing climatic conditions.

The national strategy had previously invented approaches such as ICTAC (ICT across the Curriculum) and ICTIC (ICT in subjects) which left people cold and were largely scorned due to the nature of delivery and the lack of real understanding by ICT teachers who were expected to deliver this approach in schools.

The credibility for the FS programme came from the quality of input by national leaders into the programme and the implementation phase being developed as a tiered model, working with school SLT to engage them that this was a whole school initiative and their support was paramount to its success, a planned introduction to subject leaders by subject leaders not ICT specialists, and working with hardware and software specialists to ensure affordability of products to support the opportunities offered. The outcome was multifaceted, not adoption of yet another entire strategy but exemplification best practice in which innovative ICT could be used to address hard to teach concepts, variation in teaching style, simulation and modelling, etc the list was endless. It encouraged students to be creative in their use of contemporary technologies and teachers to be receptive to suggestions from teachers allowing students to model different approaches.

The result were some extremely valuable teaching ideas and resources most of which never saw the light of day but in the pilot schools who took them on board there was some incredibly positive feedback. The delivery model was expensive and austerity then change in government finally laid it to rest. The message however being the impact of any initiative is that has not only to be well thought out by a few but engage with representatives of all that it will involve in some way.