Becta
leading
next generation
learning

Harnessing technology: Realising the benefits

The cultural landscape of successful colleges

A report prepared for Becta by Dr Linda Carter

Contents

Acknowledgement

1. Introduction

Building the capacity for e-maturity

This think-piece presents the findings from a qualitative study of three colleges that have a reputation for embedding the use of technology in their organisation. The study uncovers the behaviours and practices of the senior and middle leadership teams in these colleges and describes the cultural landscape within each.

From this, some interesting observations can be drawn, identifying some key attributes that are common to all three, relating to the development of what could be called 'an e-confident culture'. The study concludes that an e-confident culture is one in which there is:

- **Trust and belief** in technology achieved by staff seeing and feeling the benefits.

- Visible and tangible behaviours and outcomes, including:

  - resources that are transparent and shared

  - **actions taken quickly with outcomes** that can be seen, e.g. interactive whiteboards in all classrooms

  - data that is shared, open and can result in competitive positive behaviours

  - collaborative work internally across curriculum areas and externally with a range of different agencies/partners/colleges.

- High levels of **communication,** both virtual and real time:

  - about how people learn and the extent to which technology may enhance learning and how best practice can be disseminated

  - between curriculum and technical staff

  - across middle managers and leadership teams.

- Value placed on networking and **personal relationships** to get things done, to broker 'deals' between departments and to identify change agents.

- Enthusiasm for and understanding of the nature of continual **change** in education and what/how technology can add value to the learning experience. Deep interest in looking at different ways of doing things and learning from the experiences. Learning is central in how the organisation operates.

2. Rationale

2.1 Background: The benefits and challenges of embedding technology

Embedding the use of technology across the whole organisation has been defined as a measure of the 'e-maturity' of the organisation. Becta defines e-maturity as 'the capacity of a college to make strategic and effective use of technology to improve educational outcomes'. Research evidence in the FE and Skills sector is accumulating to show the promise and the reality of engaging with and effectively using e-technologies. These benefits, identified in a Becta research report[1], stem from the potential to improve educational outcomes – to better manage the 'core business' and include not only the personalisation of students' learning and learning per se but also the streamlining of business processes. Becta's aim is to build an education and training system that is confident in its use of technology and is able to exploit fully the benefits of technology for *all* learners. Such an e-confident system would be characterised by learners being able to access learning resources and support at any time and from anywhere, with all learners gaining value from access to an integrated technology-supported personalised curriculum.

Over the period of the last six years, the readiness of the FE and Skills sector to deploy fully the potential of technology has been assessed against a range of measures. Initially the focus was on having the basic infrastructure in place – referred to as being 'e-enabled'. There has been a steady sector-wide movement in the sector towards e-enablement[2] with better access to technology and improved connectivity being achieved. Having focused initially on getting the infrastructure in place, the next target was to raise the maturity of the organisation in its use of technology. Over the last five years, both schools and FE colleges have demonstrated steady progress in e-maturity with reported percentages moving in FE colleges from 6 per cent in 2003 to 25 per cent in 2008.[3] However, Becta notes that 'a significant proportion of providers across both the schools and FE sectors remain late adopters, and this has an adverse impact on the experiences and skills of learners'.

So, while there is a welcome stretch within FE colleges towards e-maturity[4], actually achieving it and then sustaining it, is a complex process. Embedding e-learning and achieving digital 'residency'[5] is not simple. And research completed by Curee in 2007[6] noted that deep and lasting change requires the consideration of a number of key dimensions to effectively transfer and scale up excellent education practice. Realising benefits from technology involves leadership commitment; buy in from middle managers, as well as appropriate technology provision and development of staff. Becta notes that 'a whole organisation' approach is needed to realise this potential.[7]

1. *Making a difference with technology for learning: evidence for college leaders,* Becta ICT research, 2006.

2. *ICT and elearning in further education: management, learning and improvement*, November 2006.

3. *Harnessing Technology: Next Generation Learning 2008–14 A summary*, Becta, 2008.

4. *Making a difference with technology for learning: evidence for college leaders,* Becta ICT research, 2006, section 2.

5. 'Resident's browsing only' Sid Verber, *e-gazing: further horizons for leaders,* CEL, November 2007, p30-33.

6. *Transferring learning and taking innovation to scale,* Philippa Cordingley and Miranda Bell, Curee, 2007.

7. *Technology strategy for further education, skills and regeneration* Implementation plan for 2008-2011, April 2008.

But how can this be achieved? How do colleges promote an open and confident culture and what does this mean in terms of behaviours? And how do colleges research, monitor, evaluate and encourage collaboration? Robin Ghurbhurun claims that 'we've reached the tipping point in the use of e-learning and technology' and suggests that we have yet to discover the profound impact that immersive technologies may have on delivering a dynamic curriculum.[8]

So, given this potential for real dividends to be achieved, what can be learnt from those colleges which are already embracing technology within their cultures. Leadership support is acknowledged as a precondition for the success of any change strategy but what does this mean in practice and how is it devolved to leaders in the middle of the organisation? Evidence also suggests that there are a number of practices that can help ownership and sustainability – coaching, co-construction, networking and collaboration are just three examples. To what extent are these embedded in the practices of the organisation?

2.2 Aims of the study:

The study aims to answer the question: How can e-maturity be built and sustained?

The study is based on evidence gathered in Spring 2008 from three colleges – Alton College, Newcastle College and St Helens College – that have a reputation for being effective in their use of technology.

- The study uncovers the behaviour and practices of the senior and middle leadership teams in embedding e-learning technologies and describes the cultural landscape of each college.

- It answers the questions:

  – What do they do with regard to e-technology practice and how do they do it?

  – What behaviours do they reward and invest in?

  – What strategies and practices do they employ both formally and on an informal level?

  – What do they see as their cultural paradigm?

  – How do they ensure alignment of their strategic intent and their practices?

  – What are the supporting mechanisms for change?

  – What are the stories that are told in the organisation; how do they link to values and beliefs?

- And, importantly, what lessons can be learned and transferred to other colleges to encourage e-confident cultures?
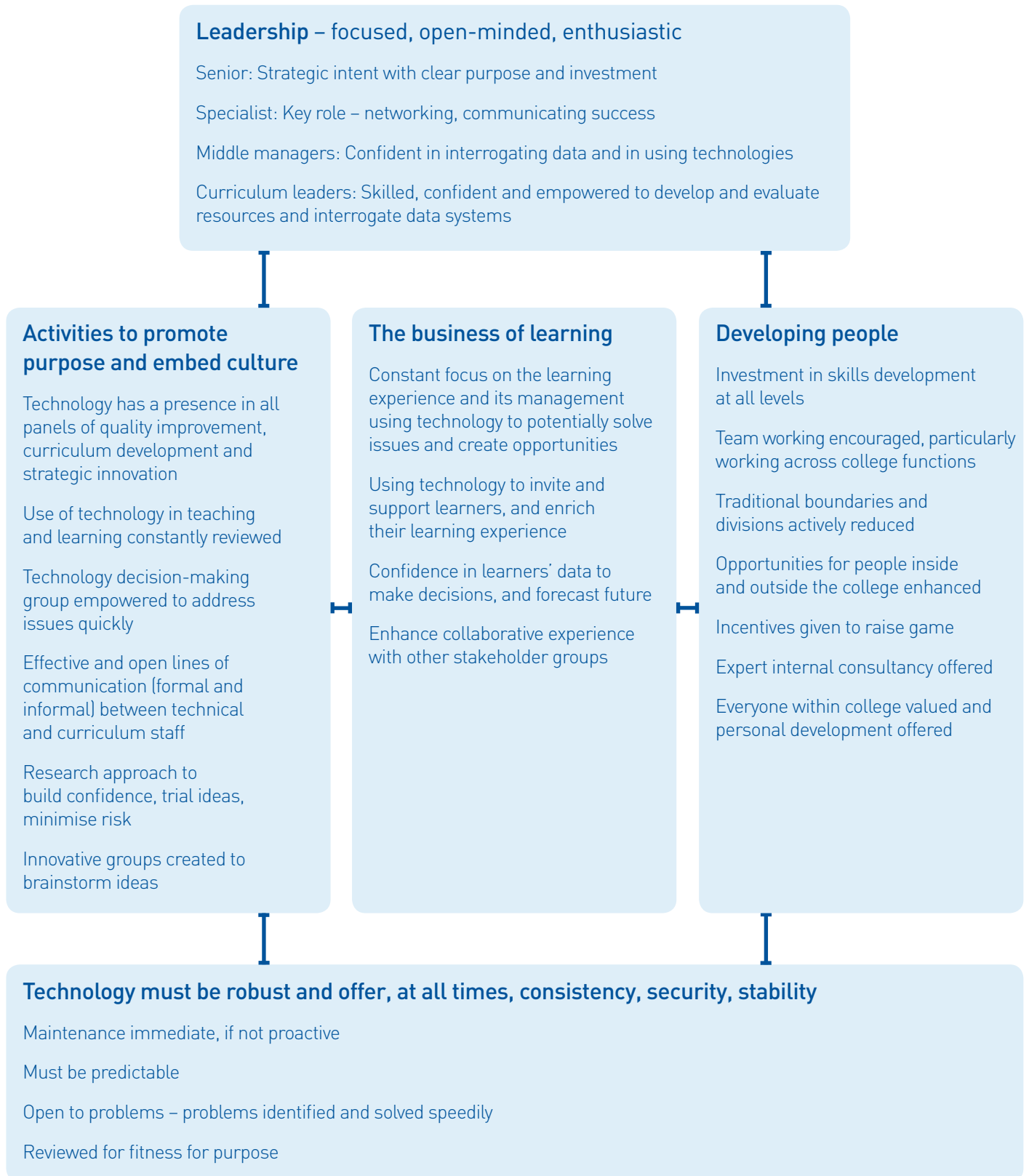
3. Key messages

3.1 Alignment: Developing an e-confident culture

While there are notable differences between the three colleges in terms of size, their communities, educational offerings, internal organisation and structure, key attributes were identified in the three colleges relating to the development of an e-confident culture:

• Senior leaders and governors have an optimism about the future, a vision which embraces the uncertainties of change and a realisation of the power of technology to realise that vision. Investment is perceived as inevitable and essential.

• Innovative developments are led by key middle managers who demonstrate highly developed relational skills, entrepreneurial skills as well as technical know-how and wisdom. Senior leaders are able lo 'let go' and empower others.

• Technology is automatically seen as a potential solution for improving the learning experience and its management.

• Hardware/kit is continually reappraised, updated and is proactively maintained.

• People and organisational development is continual and intensive, enabling confident use of technology in teaching and learning and in the management and analysis of data. Expert staff are on hand to offer support. There is an enthusiasm about breaking down boundaries, engaging teams of people and working in new and different ways.

• Formal systems and processes differentiate between decisions that need to be risk assessed from those in which rapid and decisive action needs to be taken.

• A research approach is taken to minimise risks, trial systems and analyse results. Organisation members relish experimentation and enjoy trying out new ideas.

These attributes fuse together to create 'a line of no return', at which point technology is so embedded within the college that staff simply cannot imagine life without it. Staff can see and feel clear and obvious benefits, whether these are related to enhancing their teaching, conducting a tutorial or interrogating the system for learner data. Such benefits have an energising impact by raising confidence, lifting skills, reducing paperwork and releasing time. It is no surprise, therefore, that this triggers a spiral of behaviour – a virtuous circle – consisting of action, evaluation and rewards. Technology is not seen as a 'project' with an end point but as a tool which offers different solutions, and new opportunities for engaging learners. As one member of St Helens College said 'I have got the bug' – interest and development is almost unstoppable.

3.2 Creating fusion and releasing spirals of technology inspired behaviours

Leadership – focused, open-minded, enthusiastic

Senior: Strategic intent with clear purpose and investment

Specialist: Key role – networking, communicating success

Middle managers: Confident in interrogating data and in using technologies

Curriculum leaders: Skilled, confident and empowered to develop and evaluate resources and interrogate data systems

Activities to promote purpose and embed culture

Technology has a presence in all panels of quality improvement, curriculum development and strategic innovation

Use of technology in teaching and learning constantly reviewed

Technology decision-making group empowered to address issues quickly

Effective and open lines of communication (formal and informal) between technical and curriculum staff

Research approach to build confidence, trial ideas, minimise risk

Innovative groups created to brainstorm ideas

The business of learning

Constant focus on the learning experience and its management using technology to potentially solve issues and create opportunities

Using technology to invite and support learners, and enrich their learning experience

Confidence in learners' data to make decisions, and forecast future

Enhance collaborative experience with other stakeholder groups

Developing people

Investment in skills development at all levels

Team working encouraged, particularly working across college functions

Traditional boundaries and divisions actively reduced

Opportunities for people inside and outside the college enhanced

Incentives given to raise game

Expert internal consultancy offered

Everyone within college valued and personal development offered

Technology must be robust and offer, at all times, consistency, security, stability

Maintenance immediate, if not proactive

Must be predictable

Open to problems – problems identified and solved speedily

Reviewed for fitness for purpose

3.3 The e-confident culture is one in which there is:

- **Trust and belief** in technology achieved by staff seeing and feeling the benefits

- **Visible and tangible behaviours and outcomes**, including:

  - resources that are transparent and shared

  - actions taken quickly with outcomes that can be seen, e.g. interactive whiteboards in all classrooms

  - data that is shared, open and can result in competitive positive behaviours

  - collaborative work internally across curriculum areas and externally with a range of different agencies/partners/colleges.

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- Value placed on networking and **personal relationships** to get things done, to broker 'deals' between departments to identify change agents.

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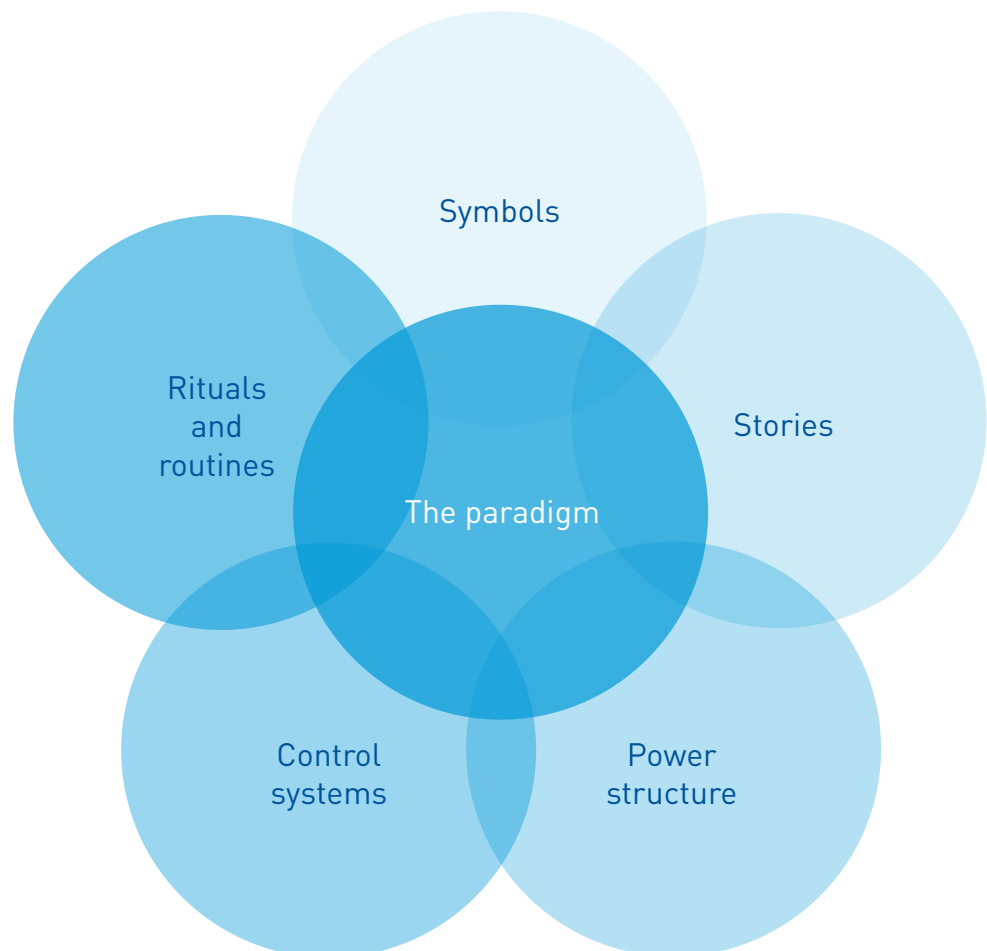
4. The cultural web[9]

The cultural web[9] is an alternative way of looking at the culture of an e-confident college. The cultural web is a 'representation of the taken-for-granted assumptions, or paradigm of an organisation and the physical manifestations of organisational culture'. Johnson and Scholes argue that culture is not easy to change and can impair the development of organisational strategies – for any leader therefore it is important to have an understanding of the cultural influences that may prove to be a challenge in implementing change.

The purpose of using this tool is to capture and be sensitive to the behaviours and practices embedded within the three colleges and to draw out those behaviours which have had a significant impact upon developing e-maturity.

The elements of the cultural web[10] overlap and for ease they are both grouped into two:

- Symbols, stories, rituals and routines to indicate the more informal elements of the organisation.

- Control, power, organisation in which the more formal aspects of the organisation are addressed.

9. Johnson, G. and Scholes K., 'Exploring Corporate Strategy; Text and cases', *Financial Times,* Prentice Hall, November 2006.

10. Diagram of cultural web reproduced with thanks to Centre for Excellence in Leadership.

4.1 Symbols, stories and rituals

Symbols range from physical symbols (as represented by the environment) to the language used, dress code, logos etc. Stories flag up important events, personalities (heroes/villains) as well as giving the present time a 'place' in the history and context of the college. The rituals are the special events which reinforce the way things are done around here – both formal processes and informal while routines are the ways staff members behave towards each other and those outside the organisation.

4.2 Symbols

In the e-confident colleges one might expect an environment in which digital technology is obvious, where kit is up to date and where wireless spots can be found.

While the college environments varied across the three colleges and within the colleges, all colleges were having, just had or were about to start a new build. The new build gives the colleges a sense of change and of new beginnings. It is taken as read that technology is integrated into the new schemes and it is no surprise that on their websites all three colleges make reference to 'state of the art' buildings that exist or will be opening.

Technology-enabled learning spaces are essential for an e-confident culture and symbolise the intent, and the extent, to which technology is embedded. The act of refurbishing rooms with the latest kit was symbolic of leadership intent at Newcastle College and similarly the distribution of laptops at St Helens College and Alton College was in itself an example of a serious focus. Daily routines can also be symbolic of what is important, especially when there is a change of practice required. At Alton College this was illustrated by the senior leadership team asking all staff to consistently use web registers. This emphasised the significance and value of using technology and also helped in identifying and tackling any technophobic tutors. Help and support could then be directed and focused.

4.3 Stories

Stories were told about the willingness of leaders to invest in technology and the speed with which action takes place. There was also pride in the range of partnership and collaborative work successfully completed (St Helens College); the stability and design of the customised system (Alton College); and the business planning approach and determination of actions (Newcastle College).

All colleges supplied a large number of good practice stories and of people who had been won over by technology. There were a number of 'Buzz' stories concerning the success of the place – some in comparison to the past, others related to the virtuous circle, success generating success. National and prestigious awards given to the colleges, such as Technology Exemplar Network award to Alton College, North East Company of the Year to Newcastle College; FERL award to St Helens, serve to reinforce the cultural values and bring pride to everyone connected to the college.

Many stories were indicative of the supportive nature of the environments and how tutors help each other, for example podcasting made in tandem at Newcastle College; enjoyable film-making experiences in Animal Care at St Helens.

The sheer number of people 'putting their hands up' for further development was another impressive theme – 'Capturing the enthusiasts'. At Alton College, for instance, they were overwhelmed with responses from staff (from all parts of the college) who within 24 hours had responded to a call for interested parties to contribute to a Learning Technology Innovation Group. Similarly St Helens has been inundated with calls for further staff development.

There were many stories of learners whose circumstances had been turned around by technology – from those who would not have been able to complete the course, to those who discovered a life changing opportunity.

4.4 Rituals and routines

While emailing has been commonplace for some time between staff, email is now routine for communicating with learners and vice versa. Learners noted the ease in which assignments could be sent in and much preferred the immediate feedback they received from doing online assignments.

Some tutors were experimenting with blogs, podcasts and networking sites, and recognised the way it was changing their attitudes to learning and the different ways in which people learn. Data collected from VLE usage and access was further evidence of differing learning styles. Routines and rituals in e-confident colleges were in the midst of a transformation. Technology is affecting not only the way in which learning happens but also changing the mindset of how people learn and the most effective way to support and enrich this process.

In all colleges the VLE has become the repository of college documents as well as an important place to update college and learner information. Downloading papers, sharing data and using data projectors in meetings is becoming more commonplace and shared interactive spreadsheets were also discussed as a potential way forward. All members of the community use the VLE as a matter of course for notices, changes, etc. and real benefits were identified in its role as the 'best filing cabinet' and in saving time by generating reports. Routine behaviours include completing forms online, uploading course materials into their programme areas and updating learner status information.

All three colleges offer a visual tracking system for their students' progress and performance, which include, opportunities to access learning plans, revisit targets and for tutors to add comments. The Newcastle College system offers automated progress reports, an interactive learning styles questionnaire, a progress meter and draws extensively from its other college information systems. St Helens College takes pride in the amount of bureaucracy it has managed to 'bust' with its scheme and the advances at Alton College has led to its scheme being recognised as an exemplar. The customised scheme at Alton College is a highly visual traffic light system; missed work or unexplained absences moves a student from a green to amber zone and this automatically prompts action from the tutor. The system filters information and automatically generates alerts to staff.

The three colleges have all developed decisive action-oriented solutions to identified problems. These are now seen as routine. Quality groups were formed, typically cross college, to brainstorm possible solutions and their solutions acted upon so visible improvements could be seen. These groups contribute significantly to the culture shift, in that they visibly create the benefits of getting things done. Consequently, there is spoken pride in seeing things move forward, belief that action will happen and an expectation of success.

4.5 Power, control and organisational structures

The most powerful people in the organisation are those linked to the core beliefs of the college and its key assumptions. The structure reflects the power structure and highlights the important relationships and control emphasises what is important to monitor, measure and reward.

All three colleges are led by strong leaders with the determination to effect change and continually improve the quality of their provision. All three principals had taken their organisation through a restructuring process and shaped the organisation to suit their purpose, style and strategic intent.

A customer focused approach is in evidence and an intent to get shared ownership for the vision. There exists a capacity to refresh and redesign processes and services to meet the rising expectations of all user groups. Inevitably this has changed the distribution of power within the organisations. People are required to talk and work with each other from differing parts of the organisation and consequently a higher premium is placed in these organisations on people skills. Connecting with others, being able to link, relate and influence to produce creative solutions is producing visible dividends (eg Alton College's development of their eILP; St Helens involvement with QIA, and European funded projects and Newcastle College's work with schools and service departments to create online applications such as Child Protection training and the pre-enrolment Learner Passport).

Technology is creating new sources of power and stimulating new power relationships. So, for example, the young, relatively inexperienced tutor can find himself or herself leading others in new technologies. The IT consultant/experts can find they can influence others in their knowledge source and the IT manager with their ability to generate funding for research projects can have some sway over directors. The extent to which people feel empowered to suggest, act and experiment is intrinsic to an e-confident culture.

Moreover, technology may impact and change the nature of relationship between peers and the way in which credibility is assessed. There is visible evidence of materials, resources, new ways of teaching that are openly accessed on the learning environment. Talented individuals across the entire organisation can be more easily 'spotted' and developed. In all colleges there were examples of tutors and support staff who had been released from their routine work to join a project group looking at new innovations in technology. Opportunities to work with partner organisations, visit different types of organisations, either in the UK or overseas, were also commonplace in these colleges.

4.6 Control

The three colleges were at different stages in terms of the extent of monitoring and micro managing compliance. Alton College has its system so well customised to suit the needs of its users that compliance is not an issue; why wouldn't you comply when it is simple, effective to use and supports what you do? Over 90 per cent of courses at Newcastle College have met the requirements of having essential content on their Blackboard course sites. The colleges used a range of tactics to achieve compliance; from staff training and college development days to publishing league tables of VLE usage. Focus was on the positives, highlighting examples of good practice, spreading the word in every possible way but also making an opt out clause a non-option.

4.7 Paradigm

The paradigm is the amalgam of the taken for granted assumptions. While it might be neat to suggest one paradigm for these three e-confident colleges, that would not be accurate as each has its own unique identity and ethos which colour the way in which they conduct their business.

But, to become an e-confident college certain values need to be demonstrated and these values were evidenced in all three colleges:

- A desire to improve the life chances of others.

- A passion for experimentation and an interest in learning.

- An open minded approach to technological change – and ease with uncertainty and ambiguity.

- A self critical culture in which quality is constantly examined and ways to improve/ develop are assessed as a matter of course.

- Encouraging connections between people and letting things happen.

- Assessing risk but having courage to act.

In addition, Alton College aims to be a Learning Organisation and emphasises the importance of people and organisational development, learning from others and relishes experimentation; Newcastle College is grounded much more in a business model and its language focuses on targets, business plans, enterprise, cost benefit analysis; St Helens College focuses on a partnership model with an emphasis on collaboration, partnership and having a key role in the local community.

Of course, all three colleges are business orientated, partnership building and striving to become learning organisations, but the author became conscious that the dominant mindset had a different emphasis in each organisation.

5. So what next?

There are a number of lessons that can be drawn from this work and translated for other organisations. Becoming an e-confident organisation means that its members cannot imagine life without technology – it is 'what we "do" as it helps our purpose of being here'. This move to the line of no return indicates that staff can see real meaning behind the technology drive. They can *feel* the benefits. Consultation in the process is essential and staff must be supported in their development and be able to share ideas and work with others. In the three colleges the technology changes have been symbolic illustrations of 'can do' cultures. Staff spoke of the speed and excitement of visual progress – and it appeared to spark a sense of enjoyment in their learning and personal development.

Apart from the benefits of technology there are, therefore, real opportunities for using technological change as a driver for organisational and staff development. Creating space for people to come together, to explore and to share ideas proved to be liberating and motivating for staff – and provided fertile ground for leaders to spot talent and encourage new networks.

For an e-confident culture to emerge, this research suggests there are four essential prerequisites:

- **Leadership (leadership is where the journey begins).**

- **Investment in infrastructure and maintenance.**

- **Developing people (investing in skills development at all levels, team and cross college working).**

- **Activities to promote and embed an e-confident culture.**

The following questions should be considered by all those involved in developing organisations to maximise the benefits of technology:

Leadership issues

– To what extent are governors and senior leaders open to and passionate about the opportunities technology presents?

– To what extent do senior leadership teams analyse their culture to aid the strategic development of their college?

– How can the lessons be communicated? Master classes for principals and governors? Using technology as a driver for organisational change? Greater inclusion in PQP programme and new principals induction?

– To what extent do ILT directors have the appropriate people, partnership and research skills to lead on and explore an e-confident technology culture?

Investment issues

– How can less confident colleges be helped? Are there benchmarking standards – opportunities to compare?

– How can colleges be encouraged to bring technical, curriculum support staff together?

Developing people issues

– How can project working across college teams be incentivised?

– Encouragement of cross college projects across sector to share ideas and openness.

– Publicise a range of incentives and shared beliefs.

Specific activities to help embed technology

– How can colleges be encouraged to ensure that technology has a presence in all panels of quality improvement, curriculum development and strategic innovation?

– How can colleges be encouraged to create innovation groups with technology as an embedded theme.

Annex 1

Alton College

Introduction to the college in its own words:

Alton College describes itself on its website as:

'...one of only a very few colleges in the country to be judged by Ofsted as Outstanding: Grade 1 in all five areas of inspection. Ofsted were impressed by the outstanding achievements of our students and the excellent support and guidance given by staff. Alton College is a Sixth Form College specialising in education for 16-18 year olds. Our staff are selected because of their experience and expertise in teaching and learning and for providing high levels of support and care for sixth formers. We welcome students who are suitably qualified and motivated to achieve their personal ambitions. At Alton, you will find a hard-working, purposeful and enjoyable atmosphere for sixth form study. Universities and employers often comment on how well-qualified and well-prepared our students are for the challenges and responsibilities of university life and the workplace.'

Mission

To provide high quality sixth form and adult education in an inclusive, supportive and challenging environment, enabling people within our community to achieve their potential.

Vision

We will be the college of choice in our area.

It describes six key strategic aims around:

- high achievement with high added value

- outstanding staff, leadership and management

- outstanding infrastructure

- financial strength

- positive external image

- inspiring and supportive culture.

Paradigm

The college opened in the early 1970s and has been led by two principals. Since its early days it gained a reputation for high standards and continues to excel. It is recognised as an 'outstanding college' achieving grade 1 in all areas of its Ofsted inspection.

Its philosophy is rooted in the principles of the learning organisation and takes for granted the ever-changing nature of education. Alton believes that an open-ended vision is necessary to adapt and flex to new circumstances and be ready for new opportunities. Learning is central to everything they do and is perceived as powerful, engaging and rewarding. Thus Alton is prepared to invest in people, continually reviews itself and looks outside the institution, and sector, for new ideas and stimulation. Developing all of its people and valuing them equally is an important element of their belief system. Alton College is constantly challenging and supporting their students to look for new and better ways of doing things. Building a culture of trust enables people to develop but it requires a leadership team willing to let go and having the courage to experiment and invest.

At their heart:

- **Integrated, cohesive approach**
  All staff have their own laptops and are users of the college systems. Paper-based systems are now obsolete across the college. Constant interest and enthusiasm in developing the quality of provision ensures that technology has a central role to play.

- **Creativity, innovation and customisation**
  The traffic light system was designed in response to tutors' needs and in the light of their experience of previous tracking systems. It had to do what staff wanted and now the system is fully integrated and used to monitor and support learners. Staff see it as an indispensable part of their working life. Innovation is seen as an attractive and rewarding part of work and staff are keen to join learning groups to explore new possibilities.

- **Investment in technology – kit and service**
  Golden principles of consistency, security and stability – with knowledge that with predictability comes staff confidence and trust. Openness about problem recognition and diagnosis. A proactive maintenance programme is in existence as well as a rapid response service if problems occur.

- **Organisation development events**
  All staff events offer opportunity to talk and look at opportunities for making a difference. Tap into talent, encouraging cross college teams and moving traditional team boundaries. Passion and pride are words in constant use and the formal and informal aspects of organisational life feed in, and from, each other.

- **Challenges of change and managing risk**
  Constant checking, consultations and reappraising past decisions and making sure they work for the present circumstances. Keeping at the leading edge of change – looking at the way in which needs changes, e.g. ILP. Prefer natural evolution of change with careful testing, piloting and experimentation before decisions are made and risks taken.

Annex 2

Newcastle College

Introduction to the college in its own words:

'...one of the largest and most successful colleges in the UK!' It claims to be one of the largest providers of Higher Education in FE. It has a large Sixth Form College delivering A Levels combined with a strong vocational tradition in visual and performing arts and with four CoVES awarded in engineering, hospitality, health, and construction. The college is now accredited with the new Training Quality Standard (TQS) kitemark for employer engagement. The college is a major training provider to TUC, NHS, the prison service, and hundreds of commercial enterprises, large and small. It offers a broad range of Leeds Metropolitan University validated Foundation Degrees and Honours Degrees. It was the winner of Company of the Year in the North East Business Awards 2006, and winner of the regional Business Deal of the Year in 2008. Newcastle College had an Ofsted Inspection in June 2008 and was judged as Outstanding in all categories.

Mission statement:

Our mission is to 'develop people through learning and achievement for the benefit of themselves, society and the economy'. To deliver our mission through our business objectives and operational processes, our aim is to:

- put the needs of the learner first

- deliver quality in teaching and learning

- value diversity

- provide great buildings and resources

- value and involve our staff

- secure our future through growth and financial stability.

Paradigm

Its recent history has seen a merger with Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College, the acquisition of TWL Training and major parts of Carter and Carter PLC. These wide reaching decisions fit the college's mission and sense of purpose in delivering high quality learning and skills. Newcastle College aims to be influential in national policy and has received a wide number of prestigious awards. The College philosophy is rooted in a business methodology, with a strong focus on innovation, business planning, reporting, cost benefit and impact analysis. The core business of learning is subject to rigorous interrogation of systems and processes. Clarity of vision and measurable targets from the Executive are then translated into operational activities and 'owned' by middle managers. Emphasis is placed on getting things done, making things work, solving problems quickly and rising to challenges. It is a 'can do' culture.

At their heart:

- **Strategy and target driven**
  All work activities are tied to strategic priorities. The priorities are clearly defined with standards expressed and targets given at college level. However, it is up to individual 'schools' and 'services' with delegated budgets to decide how targets are reached. Targets are embedded in college life for all members of the institution and there is close monitoring of targets to ensure success and ultimate closure. So, for example, there are cross-college targets set for the use of 'Learner View', the electronic ILP. Statistics are gathered, metrics established to implement and check improvements. This expectation of success is filtered down throughout the entire organisation and feeds the knowledge that things can get done. ILT is seen as a tool to be used and compliance is expected.

- **Focus on outcomes**
  Raising quality, driving up achievements is the raison d'être at Newcastle College. The core purpose of learning is seen as a business imperative and everything is linked to enhancing and enriching learners' experiences. The ILP used at the college draws from other information systems and with the inbuilt Progress Meter and online dialogue opportunities, tutors can have easy and comprehensive access to their students' progress.

- **Performance monitoring**
  Newcastle College has excelled in developing a rigorous and robust approach to performance monitoring. Performance targets and indicators are set and agreed as part of the Business Planning and Budget setting processes of the college. Systems are transparent and open and regularly audited and results published college wide.

- **Staff development and rewarding success**
  Development is tied to clearly set strategic priorities and ILT is an example of the way in which access to training and development has been made easy. On-line booking procedures means that staff can access either scheduled sessions or 1:1 support at any time to suit them. The newly designed Leadership development programme embeds the use of ILT and feeds into the career progression strategy. Rewards and incentives are offered through the thank bank and the Business Excellence Award Schemes.

- **Integration and investment of ILT**
  The ILT Unit works in partnership with the IT Services to offer a universal service to college members regardless of geography. Reliability and security are key drivers. As in other areas of the college, the ILT Unit makes a business case for developments and initiatives and it prides itself on its customer focus ethos.

Annex 3

St Helens College

Introduction to the college in its own words

St Helens College offers provision for 16–19, adult, higher education and business. *'We have a long history of providing higher programmes and by studying with us you can be assured of flexible entry routes, small group sizes, regular tutorial support and excellent resources. We are committed to giving you a voice and seeking your involvement in shaping college services. We have an excellent track record of working with businesses. Through Skills Northwest we can help you to gain a competitive advantage by developing your most important resource – your own staff. We really listen to your challenges and work closely with you to find a bespoke solution. This can include accessing grants and funding to support your investment.*

'Our success in responding to employers is reflected in our nationally accredited Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status. We are proud of the variety of learning opportunities we offer, our state of the art resources and facilities, the quality and range of our support services and the achievements of our students and staff.'

Their mission statement:

"It's all about you"

Paradigm

The town of St Helens has been described as a collection of villages, some of which have high levels of deprivation. St Helens College plays an important role in the social economic future of the town and enjoys effective local partnership with a range of bodies to enhance the opportunities for the community. It has built extensive partners internationally and values the benefits of these relationships for staff development, curriculum enhancement etc. ILT has been influential in creating systems for cross partnership working.

This partnership model is also illustrated in the evolutionary way in which ILT has been embedded throughout the College. The vision for ILT in enriching the learning experience has been followed through with enthusiasm, strong action planning and team working. A research approach also underlines the paradigm ethos at St Helens.

At their heart:

- **The journey**
  Clear milestones can be identified in the journey that St Helens has taken to embed ILT. The programme 'eQuIP' was a powerful trigger which enabled managers to position their use of ILT and envision a new future. Publishing the e/ILT journey and identifying the progress has helped to sustain the momentum. Managing without electronic systems is now considered unimaginable.

- **Team working and development**
  St Helens has established a number of working groups that focus on improving the environment. Innovation is encouraged and developed through these cross-college groups. Mentoring, coaching and support enable new working partnerships to be formed and encourage the sharing of new ideas. There is interest and enthusiasm for the continual redevelopment of sources and materials and a joy in learning.

- **Research orientation**
  Value placed on hard evidence and in being able to 'see' and measure the impact and benefit of ILT on core learning outcomes. Raising quality seen as central. Problem solving automatically looks to ILT and rapid response groups (QAPs) are equipped to focus, take responsibility and act.

- **Continual development through rewards and incentives**
  Enthusiasm for ILT throughout organisation and distribution of laptops given as rewards. Effective practice is publicised and shared. Curriculum teams are energised as a result of engaged learners and excitement in learning. Reduced paperwork and less marking load has enabled generation of new ways of delivering material and relating to learners. Staff are encouraged to be involved in external events, contribute to research projects, and build on international partnerships – such activities perceived as rewarding. Recognition of project and research work led to a number of awards and publications. Development days help to sustain and keep momentum flowing.

- **Investment in systems, kit and procurement**
  Investment perceived as essential and establishing safe, reliable and secure system. No compromises, system has to be fit for purpose and college in complete control. Close working relationship between technical and curriculum areas to ensure appropriate matching. Holistic strategic approach key to effective system. Proactive maintenance is practised.