

Submission to the Ministry of Education in Response to the Draft ICT Strategy For Schools 2002-2004

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Who is SLANZA?

SLANZA is a professional association whose membership is made up of principals, teachers, teacher librarians, librarians and support staff who consider the School Library Information Centre as central to the learning and teaching programmes in a school. The mission statement of SLANZA is to strengthen and promote the role of the school library to enable all school communities to become information literate.

It is, therefore, very pleasing to see the inclusion of information literacy in such an important document. It is becoming increasingly obvious to teachers that the effective use of technologies in teaching and learning needs to be underpinned by information literacy. The role of the school library and those who work there have to develop a partnership with the classroom teachers to develop an information literate school community. It is fundamental to the development of an information literate community for teachers and learners across the curriculum to connect information literacy with the information and communication technologies with the systems and services provided by the modern school library information centre. Often the School Library Information Centre is the only accessible place, which provides electronic information. In this draft of the ICT Strategy for Schools, members of SLANZA think that although information literacy is mentioned, it is not adequately addressed in the rest of the document and the role of the school library is entirely omitted.

What changes should be made to this strategy?

Vision and Principle

We agree with the wording of the vision and the principles.

Broad Goal

However, the broad goal of the ICT strategy should include information literacy. Students cannot make "appropriate and effective use of ICT" without information literacy. Therefore, the broad goal should read:

"To enhance the development of students' knowledge, understandings, skills and attitudes through **the practice of information literacy** and the appropriate and effective use of ICT."

The sub-goals should also include information literacy. For example,

- Learners - to enable learners to succeed to the best of their ability in the New Zealand curriculum **through the practice of information literacy and the appropriate and effective use of ICT.**
- Teachers - to support and develop education professionals so that they are able to **effectively use an information literacy process** and effectively use ICT for teaching learning and classroom management.
- Leaders - to support and enhance leaders effective **use of information literacy** and the use of ICT in school learning, teaching, management and administration.

Action Plan

It is in the Action Plan that the following points need urgent attention.

School libraries provide the information nerve centre of successful learning organizations. Increasingly information is found in electronic databases and resources and are needed to enhance inquiry based learning across all curriculum areas. All curriculum areas now have a major research based component. Often The School Library Information Centre is the only place ICT is accessible to ALL students. An efficient school library provides the place and the services open to all for print and electronic resources with skilled and qualified staff to assist students and teachers to access the relevant information successfully.

While it is commendable that the draft targets Principals as leaders of ICT development it must not be forgotten that all teaching and support staff in the school library need professional development in information literacy and integrating ICT successfully across the curriculum and at all levels. Information literacy involves skills on many levels from the purely procedural skills of locating information either in print, virtual, oral or electronic mediums to the thinking skills of increasing complexity from questioning, comprehending, analysing, synthesising, communicating and evaluating. Information literacy involves the processes of learning how to learn with or without technologies.

Teachers in schools with the training and expertise of Teacher Librarians or Knowledge Managers (Hay, 2001) are needed to lead teams of qualified educators and support staff to develop the information literacy links between the classroom programmes, the school library and the learning community. It is one of the pivotal elements of the role to be a leader in information literacy integrating ICT and working collaboratively with teachers in their classrooms to enhance learning in an information age. This is the role of the trained Teacher Librarian.

School libraries enjoy a close relationship with the National Library School Services division. This has enabled many schools to develop strategic plans for their school libraries out of which has come an understanding of the importance of information literacy and the needs of staff and students.

Professional development has, therefore, been a major focus and eventuated in positive learning outcomes and a more effective use of ICT in the school library and the classroom.

The Draft notes the creation of study-support centres where students can access ICT outside school hours. The School Library is the obvious place. SLANZA supports this development - if qualified library staff and teachers were employed to support the learning done during this time.

Opportunities for closer relationships with public libraries and tertiary libraries particularly for secondary students and for teachers doing their own academic study and classroom preparation need attention. The Ministry would do well to study the Tasmanian system of TALIS where students are able to access the library catalogues, CD Rom union server, electronic databases and portals like TKI from home. There are some schools in New Zealand providing successful experiences that merit closer examination.

SLANZA endorses the statements about preservice teacher education needing to focus on integrating information literacy and ICT effectively into classroom programmes. Pre service teachers need to be provided with compulsory relevant experiences to be aware of and develop their own information literacy skills and be given guidance in applying them across the curriculum in their teaching practice.

Evaluation of current information literate initiatives in schools needs immediate attention. There are three situations to evaluate:

- Schools who are successfully underpinning classroom programmes using an information literacy framework to integrate ICT and who have the school library information centre as central to the learning and teaching programmes. They are providing valuable experience and success indicators for others to emulate.
- Schools who have qualified staff working as a school library team. There are schools where teachers are qualified Teacher Librarians and support staff who are qualified librarians. These schools need to be evaluated to examine the different ways they are successfully integrating information literacy and ICT into classroom programmes to improve learning outcomes. They provide models and valuable lessons for others.
- Schools which place a major focus in the professional development of all staff. Many schools have chosen information literacy as their major focus and indeed make this mandatory for new staff. Ideally all teachers need to be familiar with and apply the information literacy framework into their classroom practice so that ICT is integrated as a preplanned part of the learning process. Such schools have successfully implemented change in the way they teach where information literacy underpins all their practice.

Conclusion

The Australians have produced a report that we New Zealanders would do well to consult. The edition of *Learning for the future* (2001) is based on the practice of effective learning and how ICT's can be developed, managed and implemented for teachers and learners to achieve the school's primary objective: lifelong learning and positive student outcomes. It suggests that:

"Information literacy is synonymous with knowing how to learn. This means the ability to process and use information effectively is more than a basic tool for the empowerment of school students: it is in fact the basic survival for those who wish to be successful members of the 21st century." (2001)

Submission Committee

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