



Building Demand - What Works

The Study of Asian languages

>> from students

Building Demand for: providing students with quality programs

Using ICTs improves student motivation to study Asian languages

A NALSSP project in Victoria set out to increase the ICT proficiency of teachers of Asian languages and expand their use of Web 2.0 technologies. An evaluation of the project found benefits in terms of improved student language outcomes, but also found evidence of improved student attitudes towards Asian language learning and improved motivation to study Asian languages.

Web 2.0 technologies in Asian Languages classrooms: findings from research

Victoria has implemented the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) through a cross-sectoral consortium of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) and the Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV).

One of its initiatives was the Information and Communication Technologies Professional Development Project (ICTPD), which aimed to increase the ICT proficiency of teachers in the targeted Asian languages, and to expand the use of Web 2.0 and other information and communication technologies as a teaching and learning tool within Asian languages classrooms. A total of 51 schools participated in Phase 1 from across the three education sectors in 2010.

Schools used an action research approach to trialling various Web 2.0 technologies. A mixed method approach resulted in an extensive range of data being collected from principals, teachers and students.

The evaluation

An evaluation report of Phase 1 was published in February 2011 as The impact of Web 2.0 technologies in Asian LOTE classrooms (Evaluation).

It addressed the fundamental question of whether student learning outcomes are improved through the integration of Web 2.0 technologies in languages teaching practice and, if so, to what extent and under what circumstances. (Evaluation, p. 8)



The evaluation used surveys in which teachers gave pre and post project ratings on the value of Web 2.0 technologies in languages education programs, providing quantitative data in regard to:

- >> student impact (related to academic achievement, attitude to learning and behaviour);
- >> degree of difficulty in implementing Web 2.0 technologies (related to resources, time, IT skills required and ease of integration into the curriculum);
- >> scope of application of the Web 2.0 technologies (related to the scope for adaptation, understanding of the concept, relationship to other practice and recognition of the potential). (p. 7)

"Using these games makes you want to learn more — if you learn more, the better you'll do."

Student, case study school, VIC

The Pre and post data on the technology skill and usage levels of participating teachers was also collected, as were teachers' action research reports. A number of positive outcomes were found, including some relating to student motivation and demand for Asian language studies.

Four schools were also selected as case studies, and the full text of those is available in the Evaluation. (p. 33)

Example of success

In one of the case study schools (p. 37), Japanese is compulsory at Year 7, but subsequently optional. Students in the past had considered it a difficult or boring subject, especially in relation to learning the Hiragana script, so boosting demand at Year 8 was a high priority.

Among other project initiatives, iPods were purchased and used for individual student learning of Hiragana, through games and various other apps. The teacher felt that the iPods offered

'... intimate and personalised learning spaces that enabled students to focus only on their own learning.'

But were they learning or just playing games? She concluded that:

'Students are enthusiastic about the ICT Resources and thus about the Japanese classes. Students are able to read more Japanese.'

Student motivation also improved. A typical student comment was:

"Using these games makes you want to learn more — if you learn more, the better you'll do."

Evaluation findings

The Evaluation contains a wealth of information, and the main finding is that student language learning outcomes were improved. (p. 31) From the point of view of building student demand for Asian languages, however, the consequential changes to attitudes are also important findings.

According to the evaluation:

*'The major change from teacher centered to student centered learning, resulted in LOTE (Languages other than English) classes where **students were more motivated**, engaged and demonstrating greater effort and independence in their learning. They were taking responsibility for how they learnt, working more collaboratively with their peers, and self-assessing. Many noted how much more they were learning through the LOTE Web 2.0 technologies. **They recognised the changes they had made in their LOTE learning and achievement and were now keen to continue learning LOTE in the future.**' (Evaluation, p. 4, our emphasis)*

The Evaluation also points out that these benefits were contingent on teachers being supported through appropriate professional learning.

Conclusion

Although the Evaluation is focused on student learning outcomes, it also makes important findings about improved student attitudes to Asian languages, and student motivation for further Asian language study.

About AEF

The Asia Education Foundation provides teachers, education leaders and school communities with innovative programs, curriculum resources and networks to support the achievement of Asia literacy for every young Australian.

AEF is a joint activity of Asialink at the University of Melbourne and Education Services Australia. It receives core funding from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

AEF leverages funding to support Asia literacy in Australian schools from a broad range of government, philanthropic and corporate partners in Australia and Asia.

Related links

>> The impact of Web 2.0 technologies in Asian LOTE classrooms, Evaluation Report, 2011

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