Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Catholic schools in Queensland

A position statement of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission

1. Introduction

This position statement presents the views of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) regarding Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the Queensland Catholic education sector.

The QCEC is committed to supporting Catholic school authorities in their work of promoting the appropriate utilisation of ICT that responds to the educational needs of school leaders, teachers and students whilst being mindful of their capabilities, backgrounds and aspirations. The endeavours in Catholic education are set within a broader context that respects the history, beliefs and mission of the Catholic Church.

The QCEC advocates for the Queensland Catholic education sector on ICT issues at a state and national level on behalf of Catholic school authorities. Each Catholic school authority is encouraged to use this position statement to frame ICT policies and procedures, which are socially just, equitable, inclusive and educationally sound, to suit its particular context.

2. Definition

For the purpose of this position statement ICT is defined as broadly encompassing information and communication devices and the software that enables them to function (Curriculum Corporation, 2006, p. 2). ICT capability is responsive to evolving technological developments associated with information access and management, information creation and presentation, problem solving, decision making, communication, creative expression, and empirical reasoning. This includes conducting research, creating multimedia information products, analysing data, designing solutions to problems, controlling processes and devices, and supporting computation while working independently and in collaboration with others (ACARA, 2013, p. 1).

3. Rationale

ICT is integral to the education process and will continue to be an evolving reality of everyday life. The judicious use of ICT by students, guided by quality teachers supported by appropriate policy frameworks, enhances learning outcomes. The increasing impact of ICT on schools is profound whether it be through social media or the ubiquitous nature of digital technologies enabling learning anywhere and anytime (ACARA, 2012, p. 3).

In the coming years, key developments will have significant impacts on the education sector such as: Bring Your Own Device (BYOD); cloud computing; gamification; learning analytics including online assessment and; wearable technology (NMC, 2014). The strategic use of data will provide more personalised learning opportunities for students supported by enhanced interoperability across information systems.

The broader context for Catholic education is encapsulated by Pope Francis (2014), "The revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God". Catholic education must meet the challenges of learning in a digital age.

The QCEC has a role as advocate at a state and national level to position the Catholic sector in Queensland to realise the potential of ICT in education. This strategic approach is essential to facilitate the provision and integration/embedding of ICT in order to support the work of Catholic school authorities (QCEC, 2013, p. 12).

It is proposed that integrated action across a range of areas is required to achieve these goals (MCEETYA, 2005, p. 6).

- People: ICT touches all people involved in the mission of Catholic education. People are at different stages of development and require support to enable effective engagement with technology as lifelong learners.

- Content, applications, systems and services: Quality digital content, software, information systems as well as communication and collaboration services are essential for learning and administrative processes within an environment that embodies a duty of care.

- Infrastructure: School community members require equitable access to robust, reliable and scalable ICT infrastructure where ongoing development is aligned to strategic renewal planning processes and appropriate use in contemporary educational contexts.

- Research: ICT is continually developing and requires ongoing review of and engagement in research to facilitate a futures-focus amongst Catholic educators to support educational priorities.

- Policy: ICT requires a strategically planned approach to its use and implementation to enhance education provision.

- Reporting: ICT facilitates the collection of data that can be used as a common base for more informed decision making at all levels.

4. Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission advocates that Catholic education authorities in Queensland commit to maintaining and enhancing appropriate policies and procedures regarding the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

5. Implications

Such policies and procedures would:

- enhance opportunities for students and teachers to engage with innovative technologies that support learning

- provide professional development opportunities for staff so that they are able to effectively use ICT to extend their professional, learning and leadership capacities

- provide opportunities for parents/carers to give input to strategic ICT planning in school communities

- advise and support the deployment of reliable, robust, cost-effective and efficient infrastructures

- support student-centred learning through the design and re-design of learning spaces that integrate technologies

- support more personalised learning by leveraging data to customise learning experiences and by providing a broader range of educational delivery options such as blended/mobile learning where appropriate

- ensure equitable, inclusive, secure and personalised access to technology and quality digital resources and services

- facilitate data-informed decision making processes around the appropriate use of technology in Catholic schools

- develop ICT policy frameworks that link to school renewal and respect the dignity of the individual associated with intellectual property, digital rights management, copyright, and privacy

- encourage collaborative opportunities with internal and external stakeholders whereby a collective approach provides value-added benefits to Catholic school communities

- ensure that there is a balance of investment in people, technology and governance

- encourage the appropriate use of ICT in Catholic schools which supports the underlying beliefs and values of Catholic education particularly in the areas of community and communication.

The QCEC considers that the pursuit of these endeavours, in accordance with the beliefs and values of Catholic education, will position Catholic schools in Queensland as contemporary, informed and responsible users of ICT in education in the context of an increasingly global community.

"It is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply "connected"; connections need to grow into true encounters…Christian witness, thanks to the internet, can thereby reach the peripheries of human existence" (Pope Francis, 2014).

6. References

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