

CHAPTER FIVE

How can a school build a shared vision for ICT use?

As the government policy on e-Education becomes a reality, more and more schools will have computers, computer centres, an Internet connection or, in some cases, wide-ranging ICT facilities. All of this needs planning and management, which means, in part, finding answers to the following questions:

- How will ICT resources and facilities be used to support the administration of the school?
- How will they be integrated into teaching and learning?
- How will they be maintained?
- What technical support will be required to keep them in working order?
- What plans will there be for upgrading and further development of the facilities?
- What plans will there be for capacity building and professional development for staff in the use of computers and other ICTs?

In the same way as you might begin any long-distance trip with the help of a good map and guidebook, when planning to undertake the 'journey' required to implement an ICT initiative, you need the assistance of similar tools. Your first and best guide is an ICT plan. This will serve both as a compass to point you in the right direction and as a map to show you how to get there.

The first component of such a plan is the vision statement. To get the ICT planning process started you need a clear vision of what it is that you want to achieve and where you want your organisation to be in the future.

The need for a shared vision

The word vision comes from the Latin *video*, 'to see'. This link to seeing is significant: the more richly detailed and visual the image is, the more powerful it will be. In English we say, *do you see?* and in IsiZulu, *Uyabona?* when we are asking whether someone has understood something, and this illustrates the idea that if we can 'see' or 'visualise' something, we have understood it.

Having a clear vision means understanding what you want to achieve. But in a school environment, unless there is a *shared vision* or understanding, the chances of success are limited. To the extent that people understand and are committed to that vision, individuals are in a position to take responsibility, contribute their creativity and work together as a team. A shared vision guides and develops the strategic plan, giving all members of the school a common direction and enabling people to work together. Moreover, as we have already stated, it is, in fact, an important part of the planning process itself.



Steps in developing a vision

The process of developing a shared vision in the school and, later, the more detailed process of developing plans for ICT implementation and integration in the school, involve asking and answering a number of questions – not necessarily one after the other and often returning to the same question in a different way.

A vision statement shows:

1. *Where* you want to go or be in the future;
2. *How* you expect to get there;
3. *Why* you are on this journey;
4. *What goals* or milestones you expect to reach before long; and
5. *What values* and ways of working you commit to in order to achieve the vision.

Thus the vision statement is more than just a dream or a set of hopes. It also needs to reflect the actions that are needed in realising the vision. A vision is an image of your desired future. It is not a vague statement but an operational strategy, reflecting choices of what to do and what not to do, with definite goals.

Start with the big picture: *Why* are you on the journey?

A useful way of starting the process of building a vision is to first show those with whom you work the 'big picture' – the bigger context in which our schools operate and why it is important for schools to engage with ICTs.

To get some ideas of how to do this, go back to Chapter 1 and remind yourself of how South Africa fits into the global information society and of the implications of this for our economy, our education system as a whole and our schools in particular. You might want to have a short workshop for your School Governing Body (SGB) members and teachers in which you discuss the White Paper on e-Education (2004) and the White Paper 1 on Education and Training (1995). Both state that technological education for learners is very important and that mastering technology enhances the potential of individuals and leads to economic productivity. If possible, also compile some extracts from other readings on the role and value of ICTs to stimulate the discussion.

Understand the context: *Where are you now?*

Understanding the bigger picture does not help if you do not understand where you are in relation to the big picture. A vision needs to be expanded in the *context* of what is possible in a particular school.

This means starting with the school itself and doing a thorough audit of the current situation. It is important to be clear about where you *are*, before thinking about where you *want to be*.

An audit may include a careful examination of the number of computers in the school and taking a good, hard look at how the computers are used by

- the school principal and heads of department
- administrative staff
- teachers and
- learners.

Answering the question, 'Where are you now?' also involves thinking about possible resources in the community that could help you get where you want to go. These might include

- parents with particular business or other connections; and
- staff/parents with ICT experience/expertise to share.

Clarify the purpose: *Where do you want to be in the future?*

The tables in Appendix 2 will help you formulate your purpose because they describe various types of use of computers in schools. Your purpose should include both where you are now and where you want to be in the future. Finding answers to the following questions will help you establish those two positions.

- Is your purpose for having computers only to increase administrative efficiency for administrative staff and teachers? (See Uses 1 and 2 in Appendix 2)
- Does it include using computers to type up lesson and assessment material? (See Use 3)
- Or for researching lesson material? (See Use 4)
- Will learners be using the computers, or only staff? How will learners use them? Simply to develop IT skills? (See Use 5)
- Or for learning across the curriculum? (See Use 6, 7 and 8)

It is sometimes a good idea to write up your purpose for ICT use by sketching a word picture of how the school will be working with computers in five or ten years' time. For example:

Administrative staff and teachers use computers daily for administrative purposes such as attendance registers and entering of marks, as well as for communicating with businesses and/or parents using e-mail. Teachers prepare material for lessons using computers in the staff room, and a culture is developing in the staff room and in departmental meetings in which teachers share information about good teaching and learning resources to be found on the Web ...

Identify the values: *how will you work?*

Values are crucial in developing how to work to achieve a vision. When thinking about the *values* or principles that underpin your school's vision for integrating ICTs, you need to ensure that they are consistent with the values contained in your school's mission statement. Everything is driven by the values and mission of the school.

For example, a set of overall values expressed in the school's mission statement might include the school's commitment to *quality* education. This may be expressed in the ICT vision statement in various forms. For example, the vision statement may reflect a commitment to building staff capacity around ICT use so that teachers can *enhance the quality* of education provided.

Or, if your school's mission emphasises *participation* (consultative, inclusive decision-making), then the vision statement for the integration of ICTs should also clearly reflect a commitment to fostering participation. This may be reflected in your vision statement by stating the school's intention to work *co-operatively* with the community and/or to make the school's ICT resources *accessible* to the community. Or it might even include the idea of setting up a collaborative working arrangement with another school in the community.



Set goals: how will you get there and by when?

Once you have clarified your *values* and *purpose*, the next step is to set some *goals* or milestones that you expect to reach before too long.

The goals need to be influenced by the current reality. For example, if your school has two computers at the moment, you might want to continue using the computers for administrative work and keep them in the administration offices. Your goals for the next two years, may, however, be as follows:

- Maintain and upgrade the computers in the administration offices;
- Purchase, install and maintain two computers for use by teachers in the staff room for administrative purposes;
- Provide an e-mail connection to support the school's administrative functions.

In practical terms, this means setting up a contract for the provision of an e-mail service with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and purchasing and installing two computers for use by teachers for administrative purposes. However, the issue of sustainability is very important. For example, the contract with the Internet Service Provider requires that sufficient funds are available to sustain the contract from year to year. Ongoing expenses such as printer cartridges and the purchase of paper also need to be taken into account. (See Chapter 6 for prioritising and planning and Chapter 7 for key considerations around budgeting for sustainability).

This implies expanding the use of computers from Use 1 to Use 2 as described in detail in Appendix 2 – from the use of computers by administrative staff only to the use of computers by teachers as well for administrative purposes.

In summary the *vision*, or image of the desired future, is a statement of intent and commitment to a set of values, purposes and goals that have been agreed upon by all concerned. However, it is important to keep the vision flexible, so do not have the vision statement printed in full colour brochures or carved in stone. Visions are always evolving. As you work towards your vision you learn more about yourselves and your context and other possibilities become clearer.

You may find Table 6, on the following page, useful as a guide for developing a vision.

Table 6: Guide to developing a vision statement

Develop a vision statement for integrating computers into your school using the table below to stimulate discussion. (Start by answering the three questions in the left-hand column.)	
What is our destination? ----- ----- ----- -----	Shared vision – this involves defining what you really want to do.
Where do we want to go to from here? ----- ----- ----- -----	Purpose – this defines why you want to do it – anticipated outcomes that guide your planned actions.
How do we want to act on the way? ----- ----- ----- -----	Core values – this involves defining the values that you think are the foundation for what your school does.
Vision statement: 	
 Once you have developed a common vision, specific realisable goals need to be set. These represent the actions people commit themselves to doing so that the vision can be realised.	

Developing a shared vision

Approaches to developing a vision vary, as Table 7 indicates. They range from management *telling* staff about the vision to involving all stakeholders in *co-creating* the vision together. Clearly, how much participation you would like to achieve will determine the process you choose. However, if your aim is to achieve a *shared* vision, it does mean *shared development* of the vision, not just a shared belief in it. Ideally this means involving all stakeholders in the process.

Looking at Table 7 from left to right you will see that the approaches become increasingly more participatory. It is likely that in most vision building processes, some time will be spent on each of the five approaches described in this model. However, depending on the culture of your school (a culture is an informal understanding of the ‘way we do things around here’) the emphasis may differ. In one school more emphasis may be placed on the *telling* while at another school more emphasis may be placed on *consulting* or *co-creating*.

Table 7: Developing a shared vision

Transmission		⇒			Participation ⇒
Telling	Selling	Testing	Consulting	Co-creating	
We've got to do this. It is our vision. Be excited about it!	Getting the buy-in before proceeding.	What excites you about this vision and what doesn't?	What vision do members recommend we adopt?	Let's create the vision we individually and collectively want.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextualise the proposed change or innovation in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the relationship between education and the 'real' world - education policy requirements. Inform people of the new proposals – be direct, clear and consistent. Be honest about the current situation. Be clear about what is negotiable and what is not. Start adding the details, but not too many. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give a picture of the <i>desired future</i> by sharing the vision with all stakeholders. Stimulate enthusiasm for participation in the project – bring the vision to life with scenarios and examples that show computers in action and what it takes to get there. Make the communication process interactive: listen to responses and modify the vision as appropriate. Get the backing of key people who have influence among your key constituencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give as much information as possible so that responses are well informed. Protect everyone's right to their own opinion. Set up various mechanisms for talking and listening – elicit opinions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up small task teams to gather information. Discuss the results with the whole group. Don't try to tell and consult simultaneously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with each person's vision. Each person's input is given equal weight. Seek alliance, not agreement. Focus on the process, not just on the vision statement. Expect and nurture respect for each other. 	

Based on: University of the Witwatersrand 1999

Each of the approaches in the above table may have advantages and disadvantages. In practice, however, it is unlikely that any *one* of these approaches is sufficient to achieve a *shared* vision. Instead of viewing these as five *separate approaches*, it may be more useful to think of them as five *parts of a process*. So, for example, *telling* or sowing the seeds of the vision may occur in many ways – as a directive from the education department, a donation from a charitable organisation, the drive from an individual or a group within the school, or inspiration and leadership from the principal. Whatever form it takes, there needs to be a starting point at which information is given to motivate everyone. Then once the seeds are sown, expanding the vision in the context of the school – *selling* – might be the next step, and so on.

Although a collaborative approach to developing a vision has advantages, someone has to manage the process. Even if the initial drive comes from another staff member or as a result of the general educational policy environment, it is still the responsibility of the principal or management team to drive the process. Key responsibilities of the leadership include:

- Getting the visioning process started (*telling*);
- Ensuring that clear communication channels are established between all levels and sectors of the school community (*selling*);
- Diagnosing the present condition of the school and identifying gaps (*testing*);
- Building commitment to the vision (*consulting*);
- Organising people so that they are aligned with the vision;
- Staying with the process (*co-creating*).

In summary, the school leadership is responsible for creating a sense of purpose that binds people together and motivates them to act. This does not happen by accident. Building a shared vision requires time, care and strategy. But when members of staff and other stakeholders have had an opportunity to consider the vision and when its purpose has real meaning for them, change begins to happen. Once they have gone through the frustration and ultimate satisfaction of creating a vision, they will develop action plans for implementation.



Analysis of examples of vision statements for integrating computers into schools

Each of the following examples reflects a different approach to developing a vision statement. The vision statements also reflect a range of different types of computer use that illustrate a range of possible practical applications within the school environment.

The examples focus on the place of computers in schools – dealing with a number of issues that are central to the integration of computers into the effective functioning of schools in general and into teaching and learning activities. We hope that reading through these will help you to think about your own context and to get started on drafting a vision statement for your own school.

In linking the examples of vision statements to the types of use described in Appendix 2, it is important to remember that the range of uses and benefits of computers in schools clearly relates to the level of resources available.

The emphasis is on a phased approach – matching what is ideal with what is possible. It is, however, important to simultaneously build the idea of long-term planning into the vision itself – in other words, starting with the here and now, but anticipating and planning for the future at the same time. In this way, progression and growth in ICT provisioning are embedded in the vision statement itself. It is equally important to recognise that technology changes very rapidly. Every two years or so ICT technology, both hard and software, changes. Planning and budgeting for change is therefore essential.

It is important that, as you develop a greater range of ways to use ICT (as described in Appendix 2), you put the necessary training and professional development in place. Equally important, as you buy new resources, is that you need to build systematically on the resources and capacity that already exist.



Example 1***Vision Statement – Lake Primary School***

By using computers as a tool, administrators and teachers will become more efficient and effective in facilitating and managing the learning environment at Lake Primary School. Administrative and communication processes as well as data storage and retrieval will be streamlined, promoting effectiveness of institutional and educational management.

Teachers will be developed professionally to recognise the role of information and communication technology in their teaching and to gain skills and confidence in using computers to support teaching.

The first paragraph in Example 1 expresses a vision for Uses 1 and 2 in Appendix 2 (p. 100) – appropriate for schools with a small number of computers:

- *The school administration uses the school computers, and*
- *Teachers use computers to do their administrative work.*

If you only have a few computers, it will be extremely difficult to integrate their use into teaching and learning processes or even to teach computer literacy to the learners. By limiting their use to general school administration, communication and teachers' administrative work, the computers will be optimally used to manage the learning environment and support quality education.

However, the second paragraph in Example 1 signals the next possible step in the process of integrating computers into the school. It anticipates the need to develop teachers professionally so that when more computers are purchased, teachers will be in a position to start integrating the ICT into their classroom practice. This paragraph indicates the intention to develop the range of uses of computers in the school – but doing this will mean that more computers, associated resources and training will have to be put in place. As we have mentioned, vision statements cannot only deal with what is currently possible – they need to look to future development and change.



Example 2

Vision Statement – Makhaya High School

Makhaya High School recognises the increasing need in the 21st century to know how to access information, to understand information and how to communicate. By integrating the use of computers as a component of a well-balanced FET programme, Makhaya High School will provide learners with the opportunity to develop lifelong learning skills through the use of computers. By using computers teachers will have access to online resources to support teaching and learning and to manage their administration. Through efficient use of computers as an administration tool, administrators will streamline school management, making it more effective.

Learners and teachers will have access to current information and communication technology resources, including external information sources such as the Internet.

Paragraph one in Example 2 expresses a vision for Use 5 in Appendix 2 (p. 100):

- *Learners use computers to develop information technology skills and knowledge. No formal attempts are made to integrate this work with subject-based learning – but learners do use the computers informally for this purpose (such as using a CD in their own time, or having access to the Internet).*

The vision statement reflects the kind of arrangement you would expect to find in a school that has the following ICT resources:

- A well-secured computer centre, with the appropriate number of computers so that there do not have to be more than two learners to a computer – ideally with enough computers so that each learner can work at their own workstation;
- A small number of workstations located elsewhere for staff and learners to use in free periods, and for staff to use after hours if the computer centre is heavily used by learners;
- A computer centre manager who has this work as her or his main responsibility, although she or he may also do some teaching and may support teachers and learners in their use of the ICT resources informally, outside of normal teaching hours;
- Appropriate software packages for learners to develop the skills appropriate for their age, grade and needs.

This kind of provision also implies that whoever teaches information technology will have had the necessary training to teach IT-related skills to learners. However, if you have the resources to provide for a special staff member and a computer centre for learners' use, you will already have equipped the administration office and

the staff room with computers for use by administrative and teaching staff. A vision for Use 5 in Appendix 2 will usually include Uses 2, 3, and 4 as well (see the last two sentences of paragraph one of the vision statement in Example 2).

Paragraph two of this example focuses the vision statement on new possibilities, paving the way for future improvements in computer provision and access by both learners and teachers – see Uses 6 and 7 in Appendix 2.

Example 3

Vision Statement – Western Christian College

Learners will be able to access education at any time from wherever they are. College staff, college leaders, governors, parents and local education authority staff will be able to access the information they require at any time from wherever they are.

Administration Staff

Administration staff will reduce the burden of administration through effective use of ICT, including general administrative communications and data transfer between the school, the district office and the provincial department of education. The use of ICT will also promote the effectiveness of management in information gathering, analysis and decision-making.

School Staff and School Leadership

There will be continuing professional development of school staff and school leaders to enable them to reach high standards of competence in ICT. School staff will apply these competencies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. School leaders will apply these competencies to improve the quality of leadership and management.

Learners

Learners of all abilities will be able to take greater control of their learning through the application of ICT in and out of school. This will be supported by the use of ICT in a balanced way throughout the curriculum. Learners will develop the skills to know when and when not to use ICT, and have the ability to use it effectively when needed. They will have access to high quality digital learning resources whenever and wherever they are needed and have links to their classmates and teachers while studying out of the college.

Wider Community

To promote inclusion of all, the wider community will have the opportunity to use the college ICT facilities outside normal curriculum time.

Infrastructure, Connectivity and Technical Support

The school will have a standard hardware, software and communications base in the college, effective access to the Internet, and high quality digital resources. Appropriate and efficient technical support will be in place to ensure the daily availability of the ICT resources.

Although the format of this vision statement is rather different from the first two examples, Example 3 consists of the same three key components as the other two examples:

1. A concise, clear statement of overall vision for using computers;
2. An indication of who will use the computers, as well as where and how they will be used (purpose); and
3. A statement related to the benefits, direct and indirect, that learners, teachers and administrators will gain from the use of computers.

Example 3 describes who will use the computers and what the benefits will be had in more detail than the previous two examples. It also focuses on each component of the school community in some detail.

Example 3 expresses a vision for Use 8 in Appendix 2.

- *Learners use computers to do subject related work in non-IT subject lessons in a sustained and well-integrated way.*

In its most sophisticated form, it will require sufficient resources for all learners to have ready access to a computer in any lesson across the curriculum, as such access is required. This can be achieved by having several computer centres which have adequate resources for a class of learners at a time, and enough centres so that at least one is always free of a class on an IT-related subject; and classrooms with several computers in each (and possibly each learner having their own laptop).

At a less intensive level, computers might be made available on a regular basis to integrate ICT into a certain subject or subjects where the school feels that the use of ICT would be particularly helpful. This might be the case, for example, for intensive Maths development, or for certain parts of a graphic design learning programme in the FET band, or for use in Accounting. The appropriate software would have to be provided, and sufficient computers would have to be available for learners to have access to them for this component of their work. Unless resources are plentiful, creative timetabling will be needed.

Western Christian College is clearly a highly resourced school, where the emphasis is not so much on setting up ICT provision in the school, but on stating the ways in which ICTs will benefit the whole school community: administrative staff, teachers, school leadership, learners and the larger community.

Conclusion

In developing a shared vision for the use of computers in schools, it is important to match what is ideal with what is possible. It is equally important to recognise that technological innovation is an ongoing process of change and that ICTs, both hardware and software, will change within a relatively short period. This means that it is necessary to revisit vision statements often, so that the vision can be adjusted to match changing conditions in the school and the community at large.

However, the key to implementing the vision is effective strategic planning by the school. The plan must include improvements in educational standards, professional development for school staff and school leaders, and ideally it should also involve an enhanced relationship with the wider community, and the acquisition, maintenance and replacement of ICT infrastructure. A holistic approach is required to link all the aims within the vision. Chapter 6 will explore what is needed to implement the vision.