Transcript of teacher reflection interview

Simon Collier with Linda Wright of Wodonga South Primary School, Victoria

Simon Collier: What do you think the main aim of the project has been?

Linda Wright: It's probably twofold, one is to build the capacity and understanding of the teachers of the curriculum, and that was what came back from the survey results, but the purpose for doing that is then to be able to apply it back into the curriculum and map it so that we've got it covered across the school. We've chosen for Digital Technologies to be integrated across the school rather than to be a standalone. Therefore, to embed it we want everybody to have that capacity built. So, that's been the aim of also working with the teams of teachers and having whole school professional development as well.

Simon: What are some of the strategies that have been used that have been effective in getting towards that aim?

Linda: I think it's been really critical having you come in as an expert to guide and work with teams of teachers, both in terms of identifying leaders within areas of the school to work on the MOOC and building their own personal capacity, but then to get them to share back, with your support, to share back to the staff their learning and take some ownership of it themselves. So that's just helped them to build their confidence but then have to relay that learning back to the staff. I think having the opportunity to use the equipment themselves to familiarise themselves with things like Bee-Bots and Makey Makeys and micro:bits, all things they hadn't looked at before, and then the opportunities through staff learning to actually read through the curriculum and link where those hands-on activities, what that translates into in the curriculum.

Simon: So, what about some challenges?

Linda: Probably, at times, access to equipment. But also just, again, to gain those greater understandings. So, we're doing these activities but what does that – what need is that meeting in terms of curriculum and what does that mean? How do we build on from there? Those building blocks in understanding where we move towards more sophisticated coding and things like that. So still having – there's still some nervousness from teachers, which basically comes from lack of understanding, from lack of opportunities. So this has given us, at least, those opportunities to make moves forward.

Simon: How about any surprises or things that have been interesting or things that you didn't expect?

Linda: Probably surprised how easily some of the students in particular have embraced, well not embraced, but learned the skills and taken them on board, and probably the staff as well. If I think of Bee-Bots as an example, I didn't know what a Bee-Bot was myself before you came along and introduced them to us and now we're like, 'that's so easy, why were we worried about that?!' And the engagement level of the kids in it has been pleasantly surprising as well.

I think that I see teachers in everyday weekly planning, which is what we wanted to get towards, thinking of opportunities for connections to bring Digital Technologies into what they're doing in a number of different areas, whether it be Maths or it be English or whether it be inquiry, so that will be an ever-building thing. But I think that that's, you know, sometimes I plan inquiry but the other areas of the school you'll find out that different things are happening and that's great, you know, it didn't have to come from saying we need to cover this, it was just the people making those natural links now and creating even further opportunities. So that's what we're hoping for.

I think going back to surprises too, is sometimes that we are doing some things that the fit under the Digital Technologies curriculum that we didn't realise fitted under it. So it's, 'oh, actually, you know what, we are doing that!' We just didn't realise that that was addressing that curriculum content descriptor, which was one of the aims that we wanted to achieve in the first place – was to have that understanding, so we knew how we were addressing it across the school, and also to not do it an ad hoc way, to say this is where we're deliberately teaching this and this is how it will happen.

Simon: Over the course of the project has your perception of Digital Technologies changed?

Linda: I think collectively as a school we are now realising that it is not as daunting as we originally thought because we didn't understand the language. And that there are many things that you can do as a teacher with your students without having a large amount of digital technology and coding skills yourself, which is, I think, what we originally thought – if you look at people programming robotics you go, 'oh, I can't do that', but there are lots of things that we can do which are leading up to that that are well within our capacity, and so that's made it not as daunting, I think, for staff.