

A survey conducted at last month's Association of Independent Schools ICT Management and Leadership Conference has found that 57 per cent of schools believe that the National Broadband Network will improve the way school lessons are delivered while just under one in four (24 per cent) believe it will increase both the quality of student work and the expertise of the teaching profession itself.

The survey conducted by Australian ICT consulting and solutions provider, Tecala Group, also investigated the impact of cloud, mobility and BYOD in independent schools as well as the current pressure points currently impacting IT deployments within the sector.

The survey found that 43 per cent of respondents are shifting their budget allocation from investing in infrastructure to cloud computing resources. More than one in four (27 per cent) are doing so as it provides a flexible, scalable, cost-effective model with 41 per cent indicating it eliminates the upfront financial burden of deploying new technologies.

However, despite the perceived financial benefits of cloud computing, 38 per cent of respondents are still challenged by restrained budgets with just under one in five (19 per cent) schools also indicating that 2013 remains a tough environment for attracting skilled IT resources to support their programs. Thirty per cent of schools are also reviewing Unified Communications and collaboration technologies but are unsure as to how to reap the true benefits that these technologies can bring to the education sector.

In the area of mobility, one in five of those surveyed now support a BYOD policy. However, strategies are only partly in place to ensure that data on student mobile devices remains secure. Just under one in three (30 per cent) stated that they have all data stored centrally and conduct daily backups. However, only 14 per cent have policies in place for regular password refresh.

Physical loss of student devices remains the concern of 41 per cent of independent school IT managers with just under one in five (19 per cent) concerned about the potential for data loss.

In an increasingly mobile student and teaching environment, 32 per cent of IT managers say their strategies support various device types.

Pieter DeGunst, Sales and Marketing Director, Tecala Group, said, "The immersive nature of today's technology encourages teachers and students to interact naturally, sharing content freely and effectively between devices, and providing students live or on demand access without compromise.

However, the survey suggests that schools must be clear that when they implement a mobility or a BYOD policy, they must then ensure that their policy provides a balance between ease of use, productivity and security."

"At the same time, while there's a real need for schools to focus on reducing IT cost and complexity, the NBN appears to promise an enriched learning environment with not just better education outcomes for students but opportunities for teachers to expand their learning networks."

The Tecala Group survey of 75 respondents was conducted at the Association of Independent Schools ICT Management and Leadership Conference staged in Canberra from 29-31 May 2013.

About Tecala Group

The Tecala Group is an Australian ICT consulting and solutions provider organisation with a core focus of delivering optimised IT infrastructure solutions for medium and large-sized private and public sector organisations.

Tecala offers Professional Services, Managed Service and Cloud Computing Solutions and holds strategic partnerships with Cisco, Citrix, EMC, Interactive Intelligence, Microsoft, Riverbed and VMWare. Its core competencies include the delivery of data centre infrastructure solutions, virtualisation, security, storage, backup and recovery, disaster recovery and business continuity, service desk, Unified Communications and IT Systems management.

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