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The Education Technology Association



Advancing Education

the Naace Journal

Autumn 2010

Naace

GOAL

Author: Goal

Children at Great Ormond Street Hospital School validate their learning using GOAL assessments

Patients at one of the world's leading children's hospitals are benefitting from a new approach to learning using GOAL assessments from EDI.

The Children's Hospital School at Great Ormond Street and University College Hospital - once again rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted - teaches pupils from Year 1 to Year 13, plus children under five with Special Educational Needs.

Using GOAL assessments - an innovative online system for schools to measure pupil performance and progress - the school is now able to track pupil achievements to ensure that standards improve during the short periods that patients attend the hospital.

One of the hospital school's key aims is to maintain each child's teaching, ensuring the continuity of learning between the home school and the hospital. The GOAL system enables the teachers to monitor both individual and class progress whilst giving diagnostic and formative feedback that supports effective teaching, learning and target setting.

The interactive and multiple choice assessments are administered when a child is first admitted to the hospital as a baseline assessment. This is repeated on discharge to measure the school's impact on each child's learning, the results of which are included in a comprehensive report for the home school. As GOAL assessments in Maths, English, Science and ICT are aligned to the National Curriculum Key Stages 1-3, the receiving school gets a better idea of where the pupil is in terms of levels and achievements, therefore facilitating smoother reintegration.

John Sosna, Assistant Head at Great Ormond Hospital School, explains:

"We use GOAL with long stay and recurring patients. The ability to save an assessment half way through really helps when children are often whisked away for treatment at a moment's notice.

"Feedback has been most encouraging. Teachers have found the assessments to be very accurate and particularly like the next step suggestions for pupils that are written in plain, easy to understand terms. Pupils have also enjoyed taking the assessments and being able to prove their learning and progress, which can be a valuable boost to their self esteem and vital in helping them to feel connected and engaged in their education.

"GOAL is the most easy to administer measurement tool that we have found and I would have no hesitation in recommending it as a relatively quick and accurate method of assessment for young people in a hospital environment."

Jason Davis, Business Development Manager at EDI, said:

"GOAL assessments are popular in schools working with pupils who have had disrupted periods of education as it enables teachers to obtain a quick snapshot of their abilities. Several other hospital schools currently subscribe to the GOAL system which enables teachers to give personalised feedback to each student, therefore encouraging them to re-engage with their learning."

For more information about Goal and EDI, please call 024 7651 6560, email schools@ediplc.com, or visit www.goalonline.co.uk

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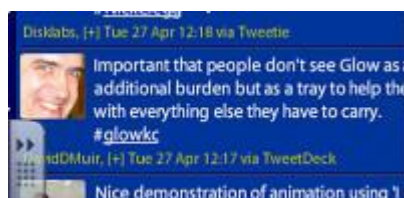
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Implementing new technological tools in schools

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Author: Jan Webb



Spreading the use of technological tools such as learning platforms is frequently commented on (and not just in social media like twitter).

The concept of an “additional burden” is a challenge that is frequently faced by those introducing a new tool or technology into a school. But just because something is a challenge, doesn’t mean to say it can’t or shouldn’t be done. Implementing new tools within schools needs to take into account a range of different factors. The intention of this paper is to explore some of the factors that might influence the introduction of new tools. Some of the suggestions and ideas are based on a personal action research undertaken as part of an MA module, others are based on further reading, some are as a result of the experience of introducing a learning platform and other online tools into my own school.

Why are so many keen to introduce new tech-based tools?

“Why?” is frequently the first question asked by colleagues when we attempt to introduce a new tech tool. So we need:

1. Relevant reasons for using new pedagogies - academically sound, researched and based on enhancing pupil learning
2. Relevant examples of new pedagogies being used - effective use speaks for itself and starts ideas snowballing

One of the challenges in rolling out the use of new technologies is conveying the shift towards secondary orality/cyberspace campfires/global villages. When we are trying to convince colleagues about the credibility of using new tools in effective ways, we need to have a clear understanding of how those tools will impact pedagogies.

Seymour Papert wrote in 1993 (*The Children’s Machine*) about the need for a megachange in schools in order to equip our children for the future rather than the past. Nearly 20 years after this book, we are still tweaking a model of teaching and learning that was introduced as education for the masses was introduced during the industrial revolution. It superseded the oral model of learning, where learning was apprentice-style at the side of people from the extended family and community. Children were taught by a whole village community. With the industrial revolution, schools were introduced which enabled a greater number of people to be educated and learning became paper-based. But now we are returning to a secondary orality - as described by David D Thornburg in “Campfires in Cyberspace” and various other academics, where we learn from a much larger - potentially global - online community, apprentice style but using new technology to connect, communicate and collaborate.

In our communication-rich society, learning is still facilitated by human contact. The theory about 6 degrees of separation was originally proposed by Karinyth as long ago as 1929 to describe how the developments in communication of his own era were making the world a smaller place (Barabasi (2003)). If we want to contact an unknown person, it has been shown that by talking to a sequence of no more than 5 people we can

make that link. It would make sense that this will affect how we are able to learn in an information-technology based society, with the advent of social media tools and online search engines reducing the number of clicks/connections with others that we need to make in order to find the answer to a question. Nearly 100 years post-Karinthy, my own personal experiences of asking questions online via a search engine or twitter is that this number of connections is substantially reduced! This contraction of the world we have at our fingertips to explore the answers to questions has implications for self-directed learning. Rather than tweaking a post-industrial revolution model of education, we need to develop our pedagogies to embrace this secondary orality. Putting the use of tools into this context is important for colleagues who think we are just adding to the burden/workload rather than introducing a new way for pupils to learn what they were currently trying to achieve - tools with the potential to enhance learning in a way traditional tools couldn't.

The Problem

Even with many amazing examples of how these tools can be used, initial attempts to use them with a class are often cautious, experimental and with any number of back-up plans. Even the technologically confident and adventurous adopt this approach, so it makes sense that less tech-confident colleagues will need more than simply being shown relevant examples, which, although they impress and give ideas, could also intimidate if colleagues couldn't see them as being quickly and easily achievable or couldn't see an immediate application in their own context. All too frequently colleagues think that those using the tools are spending huge amounts of personal time putting together learning opportunities.

Even when the use was soundly justified, it was found that there was:

1. Resistance to change - it takes time for a new way of teaching to be accepted. Reasons for this will be discussed further.
2. Pressures on time - "fiddling" time needs to be in place, so there is time to explore possibilities and try out new ideas (- the need for this is inversely proportional to staff confidence in using technology, i.e. less confident staff need more "fiddle time"). But, besides addressing staff confidence/skills, it also takes time for a new tool to become embedded.
3. Conflicting school priorities. These become more of an issue as the use of the tool moves beyond one person's/class experiment to whole school adoption. Ways forward will be discussed further.
4. Competence levels being greater than confidence levels - and varying levels of support for this depending on school context. This links to time pressures, but building confidence as well as skills is key to sustainability and will be discussed later.

Why Resistance?

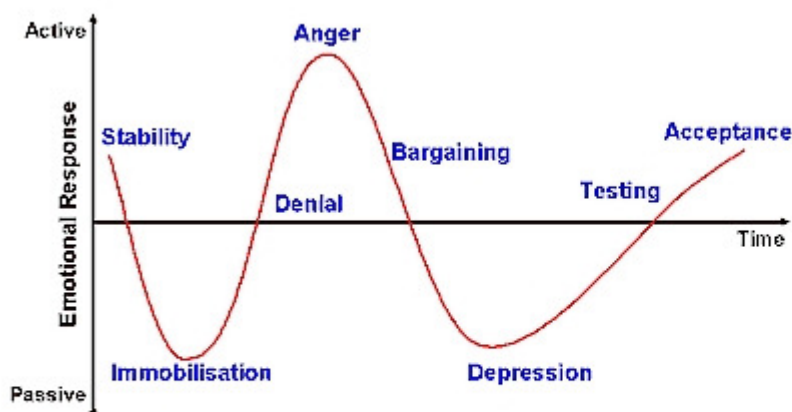
"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." *Mahatma Gandhi*

"Winning" is not the goal - the winners as a result of the change process should be the pupils. But being ignored/laughed at seems to have been a fairly typical response to the introduction of new ICT-based tools when I have talked to other colleagues about their experiences. Fighting is perhaps an extreme way of describing it but there are often lots of other changes going on in schools. Adopting any new tech-based tools is rightly challenged and questioned.

So the factors contributing to the initial resistance needed further exploring. Could it be the "fear factor" of trying something new? Or lack of ICT skills? Or lack of confidence about using ICT? These issues may be addressed by carefully planned professional development, but there are also more fundamental issues of the emotional response to change - i.e. it wouldn't matter what the change was, there would be resistance encountered?

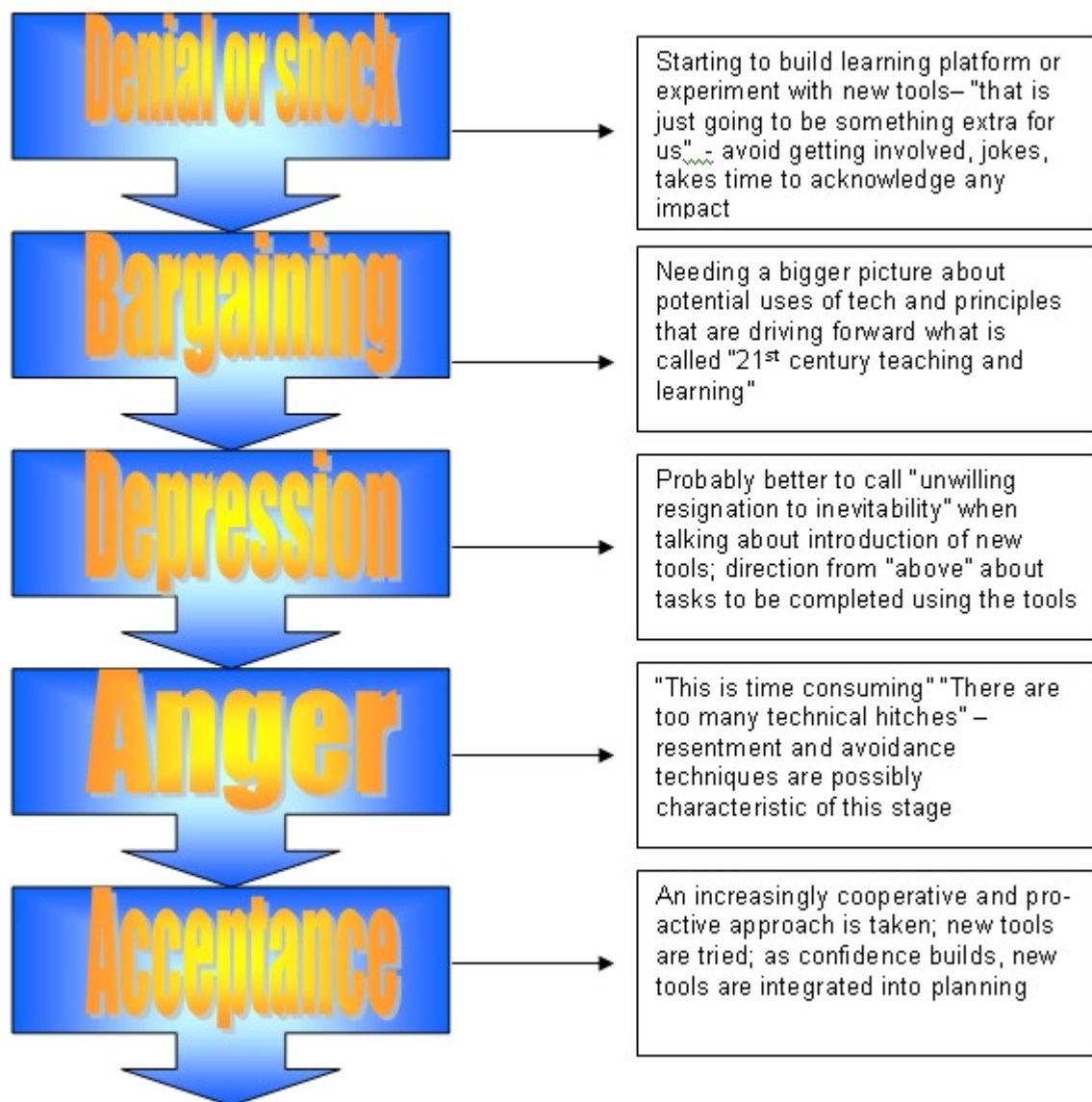
Seymour Papert (1993) talks about the "immune response" of schools/staff to change, likening the resistance to the self-protection processes the body uses when an infection comes its way. It's as though staff/schools effectively seek to integrate anything new into the models of teaching/learning that they already use rather than embracing megachange - new ideas are tweaked to fit with existing practice rather than there being a

substantial change in practice. This happens because no matter how open we are to new ideas as professionals, megachange is scary. It is human nature to revert to what we are comfortable with at times of crisis or to deal with changes to our practice in a way that almost demonstrates grief for the ways of doing things that we leave behind. The Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle seems to describe more fully and clearly the ignore/laugh/fight/win experiences of myself and other colleagues who had introduced VLE's - it seems to explain why introducing a change will take some time and that is a normal and natural response. The Kubler-Ross model of grief has been adapted by some to demonstrate what happens when something changes and can be applied to bringing in a major change in practice.



(via [changing minds.org](http://changingminds.org))

To develop the description of some of these stages as they relate to the introduction of a learning platform/new pedagogical (collaboration) tools:



There are other theories about change that relate well to the introduction of new tools, eg Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change Model, which breaks down change into 6 stages:

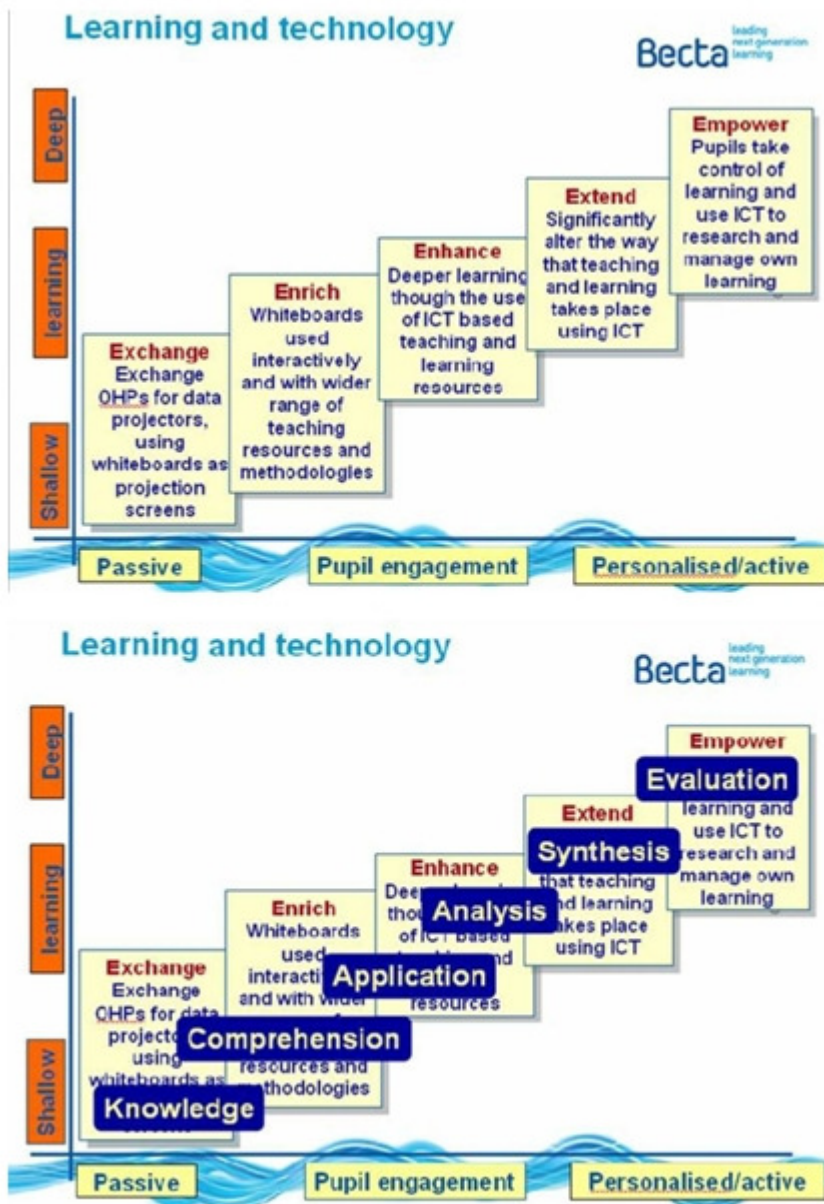
- Pre-contemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance
- Relapse

Whilst their model has been developed to changing attitudes/behaviours in health situations, it appears to have some relevance to changing attitudes/behaviours in school.

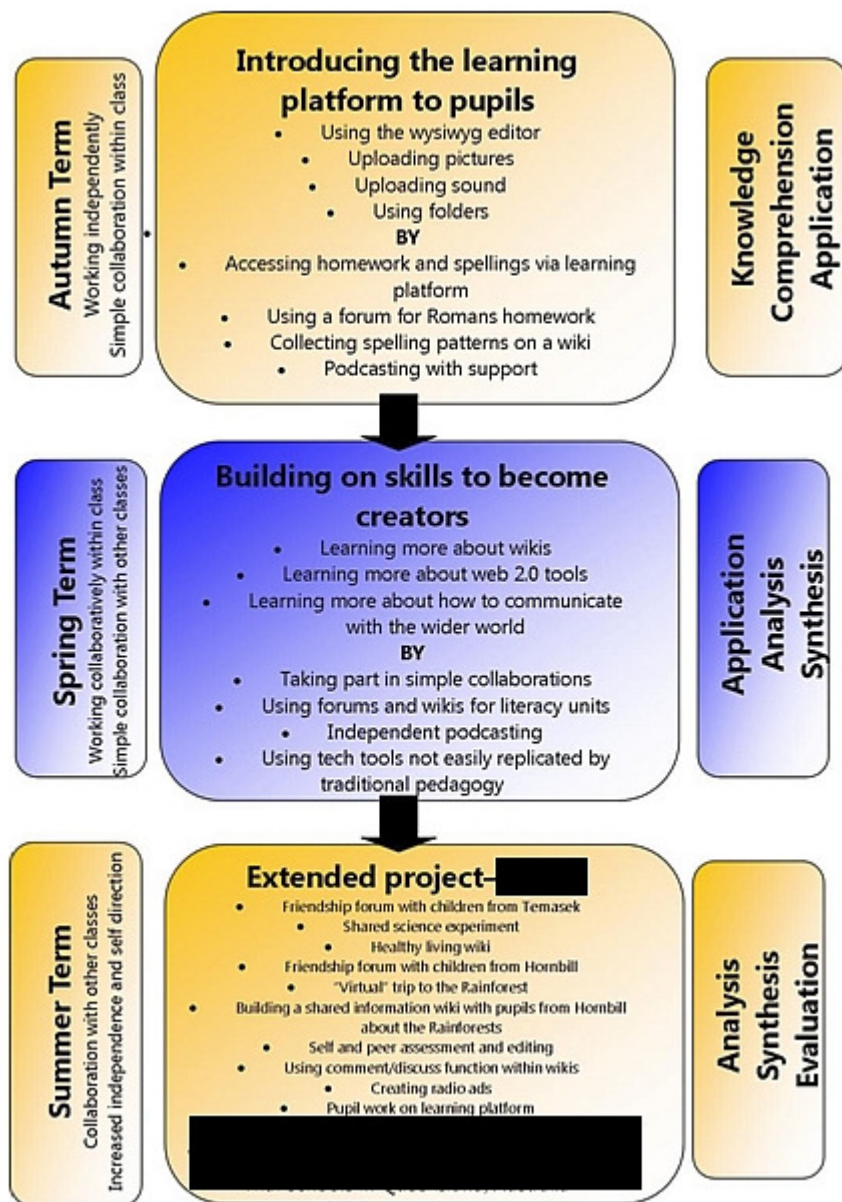
Sometimes the tech doesn't do quite what people envisage it doing, which can, in itself, cause a resistance to using the tools - some might give up and go back to comfortable familiar methods. Sometimes that's just because of time available/other stresses rather than lack of willingness to engage. Others find a way around it so the tools do what they want them to do/try different tools - problem solvers. But it's important that colleagues don't end up saying: "We are stuck with technology when what we really want is just stuff that works." (Douglas Adams). The new tool needs to be reliable and appropriately-supported or it will be left on the shelf to gather dust.

Time

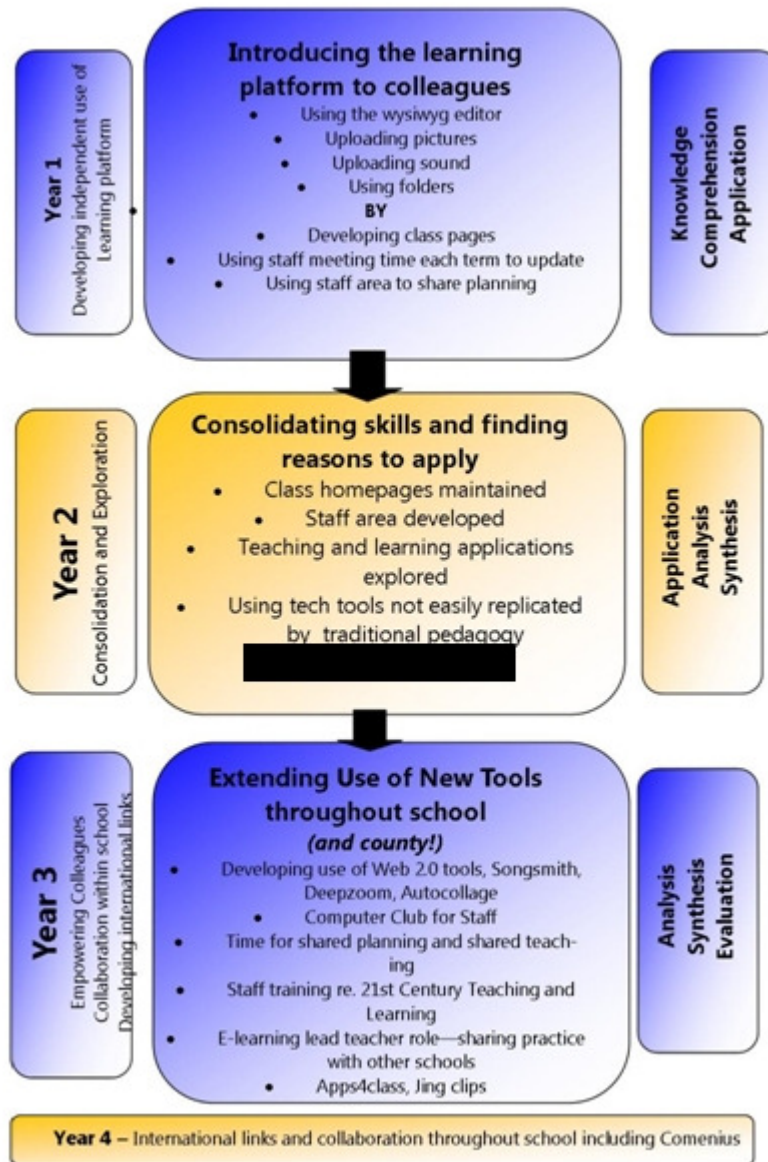
Children seem to embrace change and new ideas more rapidly than adults. Becta produced a model that shows the stages in adopting new technology, linking it with Bloom's taxonomy.



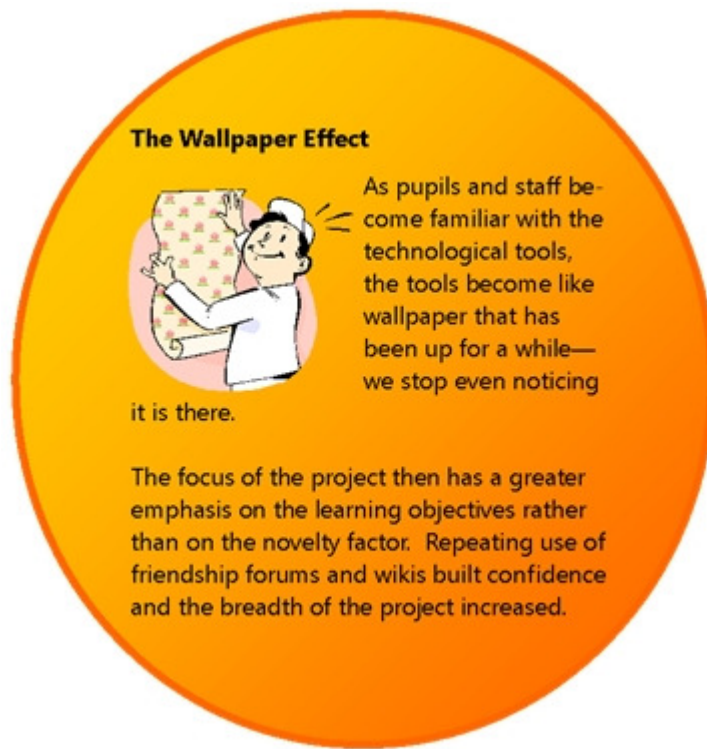
The following image links these stages to the steps used in our school for developing pupil skills in preparation for using collaborative tools in a learning platform.



But then the stages for adults adopting the same tools has taken a year at least for each stage as opposed to a term for each stage for pupils.



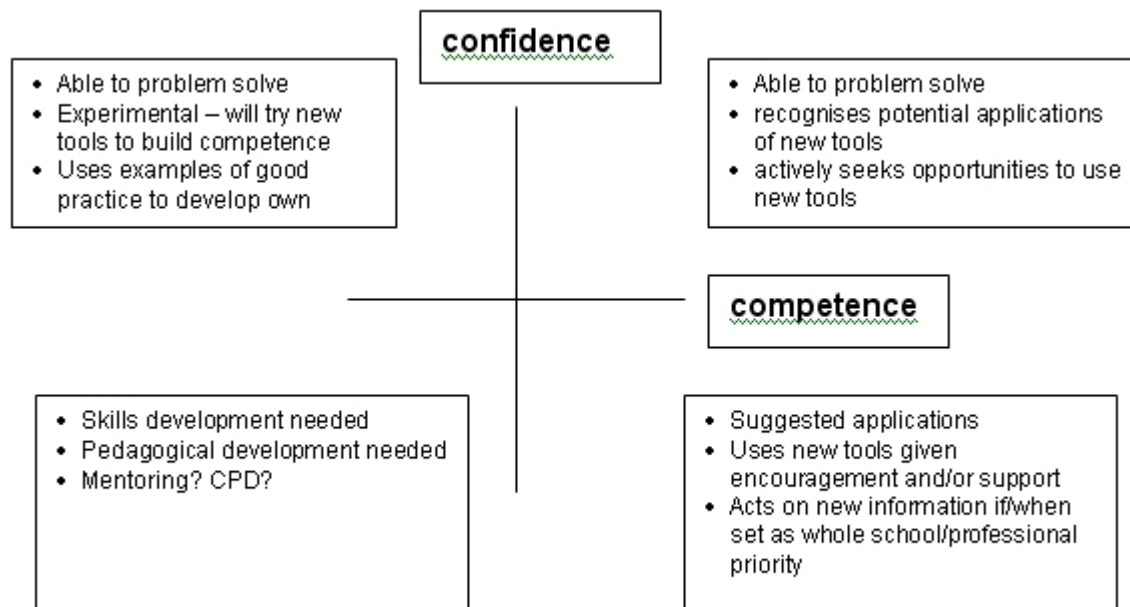
Initially, when using a new tool in a classroom, skills and familiarity are being developed. It could be that the novelty of the new tool, lack of confidence or the emphasis on developing tech skills detracts somewhat from other curriculum learning objectives. But as the tools become more familiar they become less intrusive. This was noticed during a project developing the use of forums and wikis for collaboration.



Resolution – a way forward?

Seymour Papert's assertion that there needs to be a shift in the curriculum describes it as a megachange, implying a huge and dramatic change with an enormous immediate impact. But as discussed, this can provoke immune responses or grief-type responses. Alternatively, megachange could occur in a more subtle way so that affective responses to that change are managed successfully.

There is a saying: "How do you eat an elephant?..... One bite at a time." For some colleagues, using a new technological tool or a new pedagogy is as enormous as eating an elephant - seemingly an insurmountable task until we break it down. Us teachers learn in a way that is similar to our students - we just have so many other pressures on our time and attention (not to mention being older and set in our ways) that it often takes us longer. But if we use a spiral curriculum for our pupils to build their skills, recognising that it takes time to introduce, shouldn't we also consider a similar model for professionals learning new skills? And just as we want our pupils to learn actively and be engaged with what they are learning, so we want professionals learning new skills to be learning actively, to be engaged, to take ownership and apply the skills in context. Just as we want our pupils to reach a "zone of proximal development", (Zygotzky), so we want our colleagues to reach a similar zone so that they can develop professionally. As Papert put it, we need to allow the cold regions of our brain to become heated up by the hot regions - i.e. we are motivated to learn when the new skill touches on our interests and passions. Just as we differentiate for our pupils, we need to take into consideration the skills/confidence of our colleagues so we personalise their learning experience - being technologically competent doesn't necessarily equate to technologically confident for some. Technological confidence isn't just a "yes/no" answer - it is a continuous scale, is related to confidence but sometimes despite good competence levels, confidence isn't high.



Using what we know, tweaking it, improving it, revisiting it, tweaking it, improving it - is the professional reflection cycle we go through as teachers already and it is this reflective cycle that we used in our “shared planning/teaching” sessions for colleagues. It is a process that we are familiar and comfortable with, moving our practice forward by small steps at a time. But it is only by becoming increasingly familiar with the tools that they can become an integral “brick” in the way we build our own learning and the learning of our students.

Fullan (2007) suggests that successful strategies for change are socially based AND action oriented. The primacy of personal contact to diffuse innovations is important, which seems to support what was found about the 1:1 support/peer buddying. The shift to shared ownership/shared vision is also vital but this is something that seems to be a longer term aim when introducing a VLE. That is the part that takes time and a culture shift through careful leadership, although this process may be started by showing potential uses of a new tool in training sessions. Attitudes are not always as positive as they can seem within context of training session - subsequent throwaway comments sometimes suggest that a person who has used a tool effectively during a session is still not convinced or confident about its use. But perhaps this “convincing competence” - where people get on with it in front of colleagues /with the direction of SLT - isn't always a bad thing. Sometimes doing something because we are “forced to” then leads to a later change of heart/attitude when we see it has value. Actually having to do something with the tool (action-oriented) with 1:1 support/ peer pressure to provide the social basis could change the beliefs and understanding that are the foundation of achieving lasting reform. Continuation of the successful strategies employed by the staff member would in itself support the implementation of the tool - the developing attitude may follow the action. Hoban (2002) describes the need for “individual in related action” i.e. applying the knowledge and the skills delivered in the training session to a relevant use in a relevant context would be important for the continued implementation of the tool. He also suggests that the chances for change are increased if there is a framework in place to support long term teacher learning and to help teachers cope with non-linear process of changing classroom practice. Assimilation and accommodation of these new tools needs authentic context, new knowledge, social interaction, participation in activity, culture, practice i.e. we need to combine a situated perspective (which disregards prior knowledge/motivation) and cognitive perspective (which disregards contextual/social influences on learning). This is important if training is going to be effective in moving change through stages of initiation and implementation onto institutionalization. For effective institutionalization, i.e. widespread adoption throughout the school and the building of a community of practice, issues of:

- curriculum materials
- teaching practices

- beliefs/understanding about curriculum and learning practices
- will need to be addressed in a way that is relevant to the unique, complex context.

Hoban (2002) said there is an:

"...assumption that educational change will result from the presentation of new ideas or resources to teachers in one-off workshops or on professional development days.....usually reinforces existing practices rather than assist teachers to reconceptualise teaching and learning.....key elements or factors not readily transferable because of unique context of each school."

Training sessions where more effective learning takes place adopt problem-solving approaches to a larger extent than instructional activities where information is simply "fed" to colleagues. A facilitator in these sessions will have a key role in developing collaboration, reflection, sharing opportunities which promote lasting change in schools. He talks about 3 teacher learning models - Practice (where the facilitator is seen as expert who provides novice with great tips and recipes); theory into practice (understanding and interpreting theory for teachers so they can put it into practice) and theory/beliefs/practice (where facilitator helps teachers recognise their beliefs and how these are reflected in their practice through conditions for learning) would be more effective in the long term for sustainable implementation of VLEs in schools. The time available for training in a one-off session puts constraints on teaching styles that are possible but for more effective adoption/implementation, perhaps this is an area to consider, because of the potential impact on "beliefs" and values of the teachers involved and the pedagogies that they use. Understanding the school context, culture, structure, politics and leadership style will enable increasingly personalized learning for colleagues; socially-based approaches to action-oriented professional development are enhanced by personal relationships, where consideration can be given to the complexities of teachers' lives and their work which may affect the implementation. Hence person driving forward the change from within the school has an even larger role to play in ensuring the change is sustainable than an outsider who visits to deliver a training session as they will be key to relational learning with their colleagues.

Sustainability

In order for continuation/incorporation/routinisation/institutionalisation to happen we need to look at how change is sustained. For change to be sustained there needs to be a shift in school culture. As already noted, this takes time to become the new "norm" in the school. Whilst the context is different, the principles described by Kugelmass (2004) that contributed a successful shift in school culture have a relevance to the introduction of new tools. The aim of the school described was to build a sense of community by:

- Sustaining compassionate care (the ethos they were trying to build in the school)
- Sustaining community of practice
- Sustaining collegiality - (sharing commitments, teamwork)
- Sustaining a visible-technical dimension

Each of these aspects will depend on the leadership style within the school and on those responsible for implementing the change - both the senior leadership team members and those to whom they delegate responsibility.

Different leadership styles are appropriate at different times - visionary, affiliative, coaching, pace setting, democratic, coercive (Goleman et al (2002)). It appears that there is a fine balance to be had between these leadership styles when introducing new tools or pedagogies. A half-hearted or superficial introduction of a new tool has the potential to jeopardize its future or provoke greater resistance. While more complex, ambitious projects have more potential problems, they can have a greater impact on changing attitudes and practice, with partial or thorough implementation of the changes being dependent on effective leadership through the change. External influences on educational policy and funding will have an effect on the context that is often yet to be seen, so continual review is needed as part of the implementation process.

The advice and support given to the person(s) in school who continues to drive forward the implementation may be crucial for the sustainability of a project. This person may have no previous experience of implementation of educational change or understanding of the reasons for the resistance that may be encountered. Such resistance can be disheartening and discouraging when it is encountered, especially for less experienced members of staff. But recognizing the extremely complex issues involved in implementing a change will enable informed choices to be made about the process and steps that will be put in place to support that change. Consideration to a theory/beliefs/practice model of teacher training leads us to socially-based aspects such as effective team work, buddying and peer coaching to support implementation, which may be tailored to the needs of the staff within the school. In turn, these approaches address the 4 sustainability needs of caring community, community of practice, collegiality and visibility.

Conclusion

Introducing new tech-based tools into schools, whether it is a learning platform, other web 2.0 tools or those still to be invented, is a change process that triggers a range of affective responses. Whilst these tools may be embraced by many, for others it challenges their values and beliefs as teachers. Time, skills and confidence may be constraining factors when aiming for whole school implementation, even with relevant examples of how use of the tool may enhance learning. Conflicting priorities in school may affect the uptake of a new tool or pedagogy but socially-based, action-oriented staff training which is personalized to the context, addresses the affective responses and supports a high-visibility, community-based approach can promote lasting change to attitudes and practice.

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Notes

Suggestions for sustainable implementation of learning platforms

(based on Kugelmass)

Sustaining a new ethos of using VLE as a whole-school tool - whether they decide to initially use for communication, publishing work or using learning tools	VLE being used by all members of staff regularly VLE being used by other stakeholders regularly VLE being used for learning that involves collaboration/co-construction/pupil-led learning OR publishing work OR communication
Sustaining community of practice - including a gap task in training so colleagues are encouraged to share their uses with others	Staff develop shared vision that is in line with their school ethos VLE being used by all stakeholders regularly
Sustaining collegiality - (sharing commitments, teamwork) - may be buddying/shared planning and teaching	Opportunities for buddying and shared planning/teaching being used by staff VLE being used for learning that involves collaboration/co-construction/pupil-led learning

Sustaining visible-technical dimension - keeping up the practice and being seen to keep it up by all stakeholders by planning staff meeting time for developing the use of the VLE	Regular staff meetings to support developing uses of VLE VLE being used by all stakeholders regularly
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The Snowball Effect



Imagine learning as being a small snowball at the top of a hill. A snowball pushed down will grow as it rolls on down. As learning

rolls on, we want our pupils knowledge, understanding and skills to keep growing too.

Collaboration helps the snow to stick—the learning snowball gets even bigger as pupils share and improve ideas.

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Submitted by: Paul Heinrich **Email:** paul@paulheinrich.co.uk
Created: 05th October 2010 **Last updated:** 06th October 2010 20:50
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Naace iStanford

Author: Bob Harrison, Education Adviser, Toshiba Information Systems(UK) Ltd Consultant ,BECTA and National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services

Bob Harrison spends a few weeks every year visiting friends and colleagues at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. Stanford University has become a hotbed of technological innovation which combined with silicon valley venture capital has led to many of the famous names in digital technology such as Cisco, Google, LinkedIn and many more.

When Thomas Black, Associate Vice Provost for Student affairs, one of the people behind the iStanford idea, was growing up in Nebraska's farming community innovation and problem solving were the difference between life and death;

"I learned at a very early age from my community that in order to survive you had to be able to solve problems as they arose, to innovate when the environment changed otherwise you could just starve."

Tom's early learning has certainly benefited the 15,500 students on the Palo Alto campus of one of the USA's most prestigious Universities, who now access the resources and support services simply by tapping the iStanford app on their iPhones, iPads or other mobile devices.

Tom arrived at Stanford over 3 yrs ago as Associate Vice Provost for Student Affairs and University Registrar. and quickly discovered the student services website used by the students was not well received and as a consequence their access to the support services was reduced.

"The students said they "hated it". Said Tom.

It was then that his early learning in Nebraska paid off;

"I decided that we had a problem and we needed to solve it quickly and think innovatively. So I turned to the people most likely to know the answer...the students." Our whole support structure was based on "face time" yet most of our students live in "screen time".

Stanford already has an impressive list of alumni who have become the founders of some of the most well known names in Digital Technology so Tom had good reason to believe the students would be able to help. But even Tom was surprised by the outcome;

"I approached a computer sciences major, Kayvon Beykpour, who was doing some web design and had a start up business with a friend Joe Bernstein, the "TerriblyClever Design" company

<http://www.crunchbase.com/company/terriblyclever-design>

and this coincided with Apple launching the iPhone and the opportunity to design your own apps so we approached Apple and they were happy to help us.

A few months of hard work later, and with the help of a few more of Kayvon's trusted student friends and iStanford was born.

<http://iapps.stanford.edu/>

"The students loved it" says Tom " we have 15,500 students on campus and nearly 12,000 iPhones and iPod Touches with 7,000 active on our system for a total of 64,000 downloads." added Tom.

So how did Tom get Stanford to accept such a change?

"With some reluctance because it was so new and many were unfamiliar with the iPhone at the time." said Tom "although it was helpful that our Provost John Etchemendy is very technologically orientated and it just so happens he was advised by advised another Stanford graduate, Scott Forestall who is responsible for the launch of the iPhone and whilst the Provost didn't commit to the project immediately, he at least was intrigued with the idea.

Fairly soon other Universities, Schools and Colleges were showing an interest and now (through Blackboard Mobile) over 70 Universities and 50 schools have bought into the project including Duke University, University of Chicago and

University of Georgia's Medical School.

The potential of iStanford concept and the design skills of Kayvon and his team were soon on the radar of commercial companies and in July 2009 the TerribyClever Design company was purchased by Blackboard for \$4m making Kayvon and Joe \$ millionaires when just 20! They now form the core of the Blackboard Mobile project and their team has grown from 4 to 50.

<http://www.blackboard.com/Mobile/Overview.aspx>

So what comes next for Tom Black and his iStanford dream?

We are adding functionality to the app all the time" said Tom " I think wifi is a utility now and the tablet and iPad provides us with so much scope for further development of our student support systems, registration, advice and guidance, career counselling, electronic portfolios and transcripts, ongoing contact with alumni, the potential is endless" Tom added enthusiastically.

ALT are hoping to invite Tom Black to present at ALT-C 2011

Kensington and Chelsea College have also taken up the challenge to help prospective students find out about its courses and send in applications. The software will give users access to the admissions team, news about the college and a map of the campuses in West London.

Shanie Jamieson, director for community regeneration at the college said

" We want to give our students and potential students the easiest, fastest and most accessible platform for getting in touch with us."

This is a trend that is going to continue surely?

Postscript:

Bob also spent a day at the recently formed History of the Computer Museum just down the road from Google HQ in Mountain View and recommends a visit for any ALT members in the San Francisco Bay area especially as the working prototype Babbage machine is currently on loan and some major new exhibits are being added.

<http://www.computerhistory.org/>

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Learning Platforms and Personalised Learning: It's all about the pedagogy

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Author: Jim Fanning, Assistant Headteacher, Tideway School

It's been five years since the 2005 White Paper introduced a personalised online learning space for every pupil. The development of the technology in the shape of learning platforms has not been without its issues, not the least of these being a lack of clarity in respect to purpose. The White Paper linked the technology to a change in pedagogy, yet the DCSF learning platform publications of the same year provided little guidance as to what that change might be. In the academic year 2008-09 I carried out research into the ways in which a learning platform could support approaches to personalised learning in Tideway School. The final research dissertation is now being written up and some key findings are beginning to emerge.

Tideway is an 11-16-specialist technology college that serves the coastal community of Newhaven in East Sussex. The school has been using a virtual learning environment in one shape or form since 2002. In 2008 it adopted a platform supported by the local authority. Online collaboration was perceived to be an important element within learning supported by this technology. Senior leaders explained that it would have made very little sense to use a platform that was different from local partner schools. There was also the added benefit of local authority support, mainly through training and the dissemination of good practice. In the early planning discussions senior leaders were aware that VLE applications, whether used individually or in an integrated way, could have an impact on classroom practice in relation to assessment, differentiation, collaboration and flexible learning. All of these are common themes that run through the literature relating to personalised learning.

From 2008 onwards I collected a range of evidence including data from the learning platform, classroom observations and teacher and pupil interviews. A number of interventions were also designed to test aspects of platform use. In January 2009 the platform was embedded in the teaching of a six-week unit of study for Year 10 pupils engaged in GCSE history. In February 2009, during a two-week school closure, a significant part of the curriculum was made available online.

By the end of the research period a small minority of staff had never accessed the platform. The vast majority had used it on an irregular basis to support specific projects. A minority, about 16%, had applied it regularly within their classroom teaching. This group was made up mainly of staff that had qualified within the past five years and who had used a VLE in their university based training, although they drew few links between that experience and the ways in which the technology could be applied in school. When contacted, local teacher training organisations agreed that platform use in the classroom did not feature to any great extent within their programmes of study.

Ways in which we already 'do things' can have a powerful influence on how new technology is applied and in most subjects the platform was used initially to replicate existing practice.

Summative was the most common model of assessment across subject areas. It's no great surprise that this then became the dominant model where the platform was being used. In ICT, History and Science lessons at KS4, GCSE style mock online tests were designed to assess pupil progress against school targets and as a preparation for the formal end of key stage exams. Design Technology was the only subject to experiment with online summative assessment through the use of forums. Over the course of six weeks pupils had to create individual letters for a sign, post their designs into the class forum for feedback and then produce a

final design that gave them their finished product and assessment grade. The teacher regularly responded to pupils on the forum over the six weeks, providing advice on improvement strategies. There was clear evidence that such ongoing formative assessment by the teacher had a clear impact on pupil learning outcomes.

Teachers said they already differentiated through learning objectives, lesson resources and classroom support. Where evidence of this was found on the platform it mainly related to differentiation by learning resource, although even here a one-size-fits-all approach was common. History had begun to explore issues relating to the re-design of resources and the inclusion of multimedia material to support different levels of learning. ICT teachers had attempted to create different learning pathways through lessons for pupils of different ability, although the time involved in creating this material proved overwhelming in the short term.

Most staff understood collaborative learning in terms of group work. There were a lot of examples of group work using the platform, with evidence of elements of collaborative practice, but no examples of platform projects being used in a truly collaborative way. During the six week GCSE History intervention pupils proved remarkably resistant in engaging with those aspects of the course that were designed around applications that required interaction. For example, an outside expert had been recruited to offer support through the class forum but only a minority of pupils made use of this, preferring the immediacy of learning in the face-to-face classroom.

Most teachers described flexible learning in terms of pupil access to learning resources outside normal school hours. Many subjects used the platform as an extension to the school network, with resources being uploaded to support learning. It's interesting to note that where pupils were given a choice of completing their studies through the platform during the February Online project a significant minority, about 46%, selected to complete work as a paper based exercise rather than access files online.

Describing what happens in school in relation to the learning platform is a fairly easy process. Understanding the reasons behind what is being observed is more complex. When asked what was the greatest barrier to platform use there was a three way split in opinion between teachers. Classroom access to computers, skills training and pedagogy were the key areas identified.

Computer access in school is the red herring in this scenario. The pupil: PC ratio was 1:3 and there were four dedicated computer areas that could be booked by teachers, as well as a number of rooms where small group work supported by technology could take place. Subsequent to this research project English and History teaching areas were equipped with banks of wireless enabled Netbooks and one further computer suite was created for PE teaching. Computer access out of school to support flexible learning was an issue. 6% of the pupil population did not have access to an Internet enabled PC at home. This figure masked a far larger proportion who had very limited access due to the pressures of other family members using the one home based PC. Add to this the fact that just over 60% claimed to have broadband access, rendering the use of platform based multi-media 'slow'. Beyond technical issues the school had not attempted to clarify or define the purposes of flexible learning or the impacts on staff workload.

Where teachers had attended skills training it had focused on those technical aspects required to set up an individual application such as a forum or a wiki. By and large it had not dealt with 'models' of teaching with the technology. A typical model of forum use requires the teacher to act as a moderator of the discussions, motivating, encouraging and clarifying, whilst summarising discussion threads and drawing out key learning points for pupils. There are a number of assessment models that evaluate forum use in terms of surface and deep learning. Where a teacher is only equipped with the technical aspects of an application, the actual learning may not live up to its potential. Integrated use of platform applications was also noticeable by its absence in training provision.

If I had to make a professional judgement about a key element that underpins the whole development of

learning platforms and personalised learning then it would be 'the vision thing' in relation to pedagogy. Whilst theories of e-learning tend to be adaptations of existing models of learning a poll of staff suggested that a large majority were at least aware of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bloom, but almost none acknowledged those who work in the field of elearning such as Salmon, Laurillard or Wenger. In terms of the classroom this means that teachers have neither a vision nor a model of use on which to base the introduction of the technology into their lessons, especially in terms of the integrated use of the different elements with a platform. As a result rather than inventing the future we reinvent the past, giving pupils more of the same. It's all about pedagogy and that is what should be considered first before a school or a teacher plans for learning platform use in the classroom.

Time and politics may be catching up with learning platforms. The technology does not lend itself to a quick fix, with a development period of anything from two to five years in individual schools before real benefits can be seen. As BECTA goes it is unclear who will provide a lead nationally in platform development, or who will sponsor the kind of research by which development can be judged. A coalition government may question the value of the rather ill defined personalised learning agenda and its main technological prop, the learning platform.

Note: these are my personal reflections on the professional use of learning platform applications at Tideway School and do not reflect in any way the views of the school. The terms VLE and learning platform are used in an inter-changeable way through out this article.

Background: Jim Fanning is an Assistant Headteacher at Tideway School in East Sussex. He teaches ICT. In 2006 he enrolled on a professional educational doctorate (EdD) at Sussex University. He can be contacted on fanningj@tidewayschool.org. Case studies relating to learning platform use on the school can be found at www.learningplatforms.info.

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Naace

Online Safety Policy and Practice in the UK – An Analysis of 360 degree safe self review data

Author: Dr Andy Phippen, School of Management, University of Plymouth

Report prepared for the South West Grid for Learning. September 2010

Executive Summary

The 360 Degree Safe e-safety self review tool provides schools with the resources to explore their current policy and practice around safe online engagement. It collects these self reviews that online safety in schools.

This report presents an analysis of data submitted from 547 education establishments from across UK, and is believed to be the largest study of its kind in the world. It provides an evidence base that has not previously existed and allows us to understand national performance as never before. The data shows that in some aspects there are strengths, and these generally focus on infrastructure and policy areas, such as:

- Filtering
- Acceptable Use Policies
- Policy Scope
- Policy development

However, in these weakest areas, around wider engagement or education, the data suggests that schools require further development and support:

- Community understanding
- Governor training
- Monitoring the impact of policy and practice
- E-Safety Committee
- Staff training

One of the lowest rated aspects of online safety in schools is staff training. This was found to be consistent across all types of schools. Without a sound knowledge base in their staff, how can schools play a central role in making the online world a safer place for young people.

We can also demonstrate that primary schools are consistently less developed in their policy and practice compared to their secondary counterparts, and have significant issues in whole school involvement and those issues that require significant specialist knowledge (such as ensuring effective technical security in schools).

The data also suggests that while there is regional variation in performance, there is a consistent pattern of activity across the country that supports the theory that schools are more effective at policy and protection mechanisms than consistent long term education. However, it also suggests that urban settings might have better resourcing to provide a more consistent practice than in rural settings. However, this does require more data and further analysis.

This report will become an annual publication by the South West Grid for Learning which will provide a “state of the nation” report on online safety. These annual reports will provide an unparalleled evidence base for informing thinking in schools as well driving policy change in the field. The database will continue to grow as more establishments sign up and will increase in authority as the tool and its adoption matures.

Introduction

360 degree safe was launched by SWGfL in November 2009 to allow schools to evaluate their own online safety provision; benchmark that provision against others; identify and prioritise areas for improvement and find advice and support to move forwards.

Over 650 have already used the free resource which integrates online safety into school policy and the curriculum in a way that actively challenges teachers and managers in the school to think about their online safety provision, and its continual evolution.

The flexibility of 360 degree safe is such that it can be introduced at any speed (as appropriate to the school’s situation) and can be used in any size or type of school. As each question is raised so it provides suggestions for improvements and also makes suggestions for possible sources of evidence which can be used to support judgements and be offered to inspectors when required.

In one particularly interesting development, where evidence is needed, the program provides links to specific areas of relevant documents, rather than simply signposting documents on the web. This saves time for everyone concerned about online safety, and allows the school to show immediately the coverage and relevance of its online safety provision.

360 degree safe will also provide summary reports of progression, (again this is useful when challenged), and is an excellent way of helping

all staff (not just those charged with the job of implementing an online safety policy) to understand the scope of online safety and what the school is doing about the issue. Above all 360 degree safe provides a prioritised action plan, suggesting not just what needs to be done, but also in what order it needs to be done. This is a vital bonus for teachers and managers who approach the issue of online safety for the first time, in a school which has no (or only a very rudimentary) policy.

This self review process is more meaningful if it includes the perceptions and views of all stakeholders. As broad a group of people as possible should be involved to ensure the ownership of online safety is widespread.

Once they have registered to take part in 360 degree safe process the school will be able to download the Commitment to E-Safety Certificate form for signing by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors as a sign of the commitment to use the online tool. Once the school has completed some of the elements of 360 degree safe tool then the E-Safety Certificate of Progress can be awarded.

When the school meets the benchmark levels it is formally assessed before being awarded the “E-Safety Mark”, an award validated and approved by the University of Plymouth.

For more information subscribe to the SWGfL E-Safety mailing list for future updates at:

www.swgfl.org.uk/maillinglist and visit the website <http://www.360safe.org.uk/> An overview of the 360 structure, detailing aspects covered, can be found at <http://360safe.org.uk/Files/Documents/360-degree-safe-Structure-Map>.

Methodology

An overview of the 360 structure, detailing aspects covered, can be found at

<http://360safe.org.uk/Files/Documents/360-degree-safe-Structure-Map>. Establishments carry out the self review via a web interface and submitted data is stored in a relational database structure which holds the information in a collection of related “tables”, each table related to a specific data element within the system. The three data tables which provide the core for analysis relate to establishments, 360 degree safe aspects, and individual ratings, which detail an entry that an establishment has made against a specific aspect.

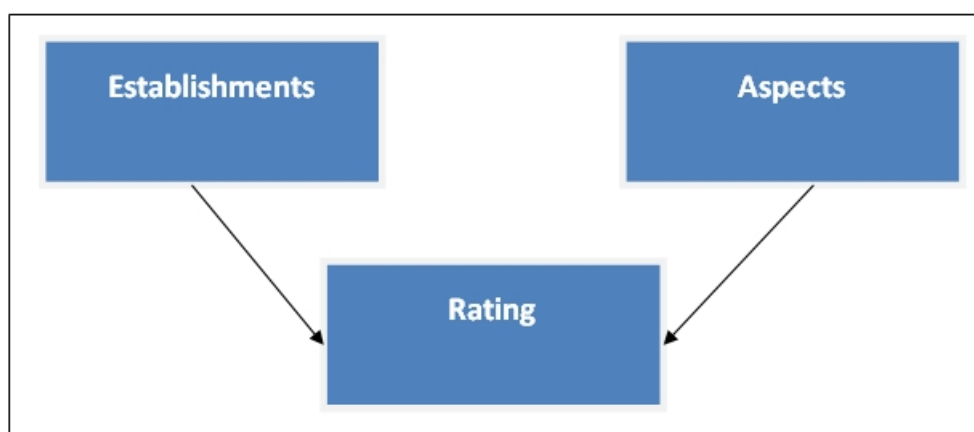


Figure 1 - 360 data structure

Each establishment’s “profile” comprises a number of entries in the rating table, each related to a specific aspect. It is possible for an establishment to have more than one entry in the rating table associated with a specific aspect which would reflect that they are using the tool for school improvement around online safety practice. An establishment’s profile will also reflect their current stage.

Given the relational structure of the 360 degree safe data, the primary approach to analysis is through the use of SQL¹. This approach provides the means to explore the data in the table structures. In addition, summary data was loaded into Microsoft Excel for further statistical analysis and graphing.

Analysis of the data focuses on establishment’s self review of their online safety policy and practice, exploring their ratings against the 28 aspects of 360 degree safe. Aspect exploration allows the measurement of degrees of progression and improvement in the self review and those where, in general, policy and practice among UK educational establishment requires support to support further progress.

It should be acknowledged that the data being explored is self reviewed - the establishments give themselves ratings against the aspects and level definitions. It is not “validated” data without an inspection, which will only occur if the establishment wishes to gain accreditation. However, self review is well established practice within the UK school system and level descriptors are very clearly defined. In addition, accreditation visits to date have demonstrated that in the instances of inspection that have occurred, self review ratings have been generally accurate. They also show that many establishments have input for a wide and varied range of stakeholders which again ensures accuracy of self review.

Details of the Establishments Analysed

In total, once test data has been removed, the analysis presented in this report is based on responses from 547 establishments across England.

Given the South West origins of the tool, it is no surprise that the majority of responding establishments were in that region. However, there were establishments from all areas of England, and one in Wales. Based upon the local authority specified by each establishment, figure 1 details the proportion of establishments from different regions. In addition, 45 non-local authority establishments were represented, including independent schools, organisations and individual professionals.

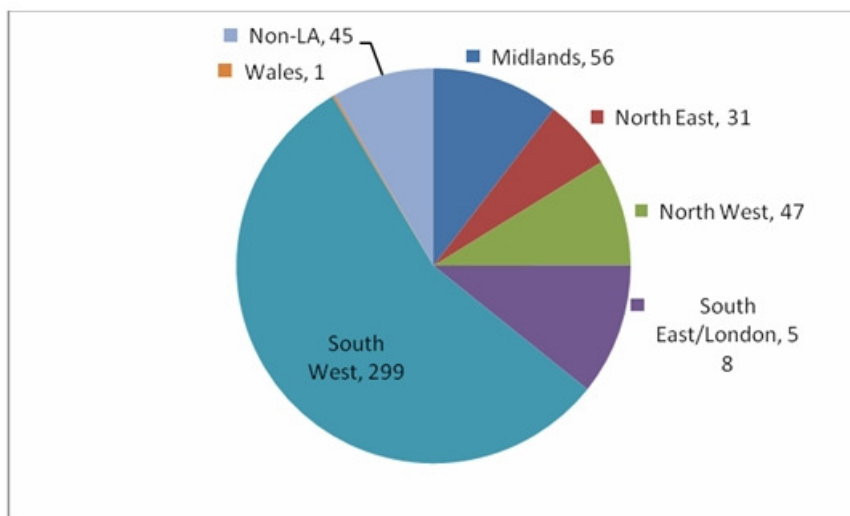


Figure 2 - Establishment geography

The “phase” of the establishment responses shows the breakdown between primary, secondary and “other”, as well as those non-local authority establishments that did not specify. “Other” schools included special educational needs and community schools.

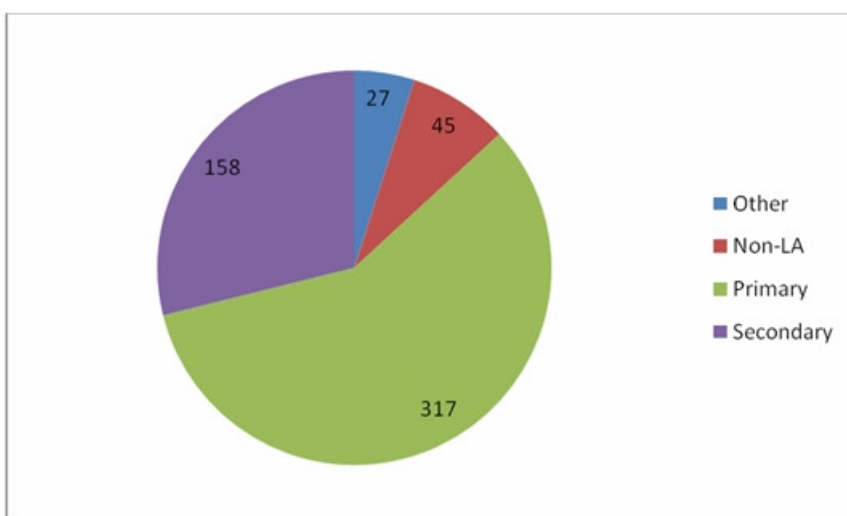


Figure 3 - Establishment “phase”

Analysis of Aspect Performance

Top level analysis of practice and policy performance explores responses to different aspects given by each establishment. As noted above, it is possible for establishments to use the 360 degree safe tool to monitor their own development, and track progress on specific aspects by modifying their self review rating based upon school improvements. The tool keeps an historical log of all ratings so, in theory, it can be used to look at the evolution of an establishment’s profile over time. However, it should be noted that the tool has been available for establishments to use for less than a year and as such most have not embarked on the use of the tool in this manner. Less than 10% of establishments have posted more than one rating on any given aspect, and therefore for this report, the “best” rating (i.e the lowest value) for each establishment will be considered in the aspect analysis. It is anticipated that in future years this report will explore trends in school improvement as a result of long term use of the tool.

It should also be noted that it is not necessary for an establishment to have completed the full self review to have it’s data logged in the tool. Therefore, different aspects have been rated by different numbers of establishments. In total, 267 establishments from our population have carried out the full self review. Of those establishments that have not completed a full review, figure 4 illustrates the variety of levels of completion to

date. It details the number of establishments that have achieved each given number of aspects to show the range of completion

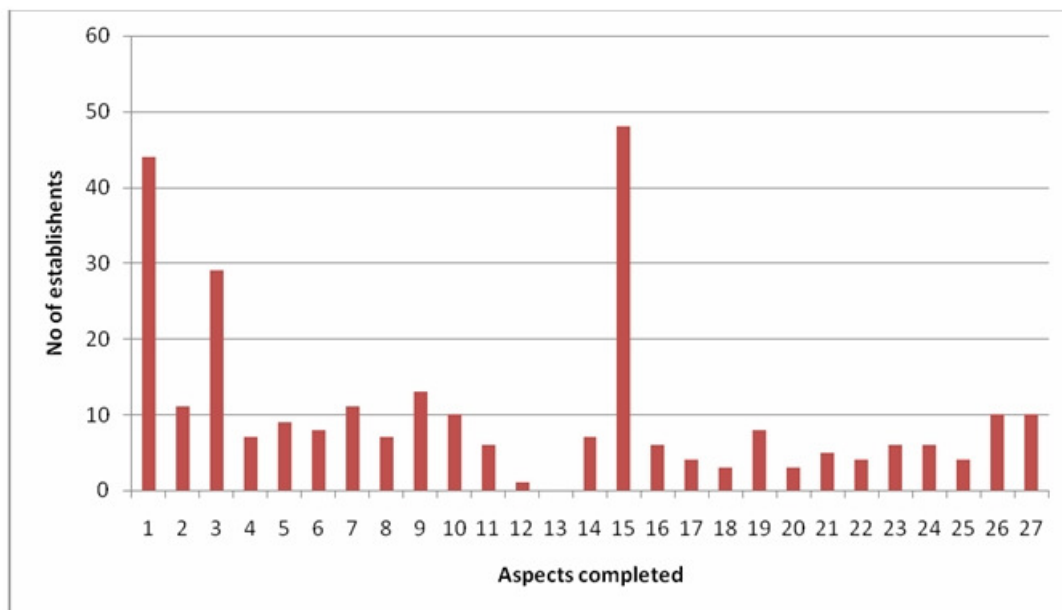


Figure 4 – The number of aspects completed by any establishment that has not done the full review

This breakdown shows a spread of responses from those still in the early stages of self review to those nearing completion of the full set of aspects.

In further exploring which aspects are more “popular” with establishments, we can examine each aspect and the number of establishments who have completed a self review of that element. This is detailed in figure 5:

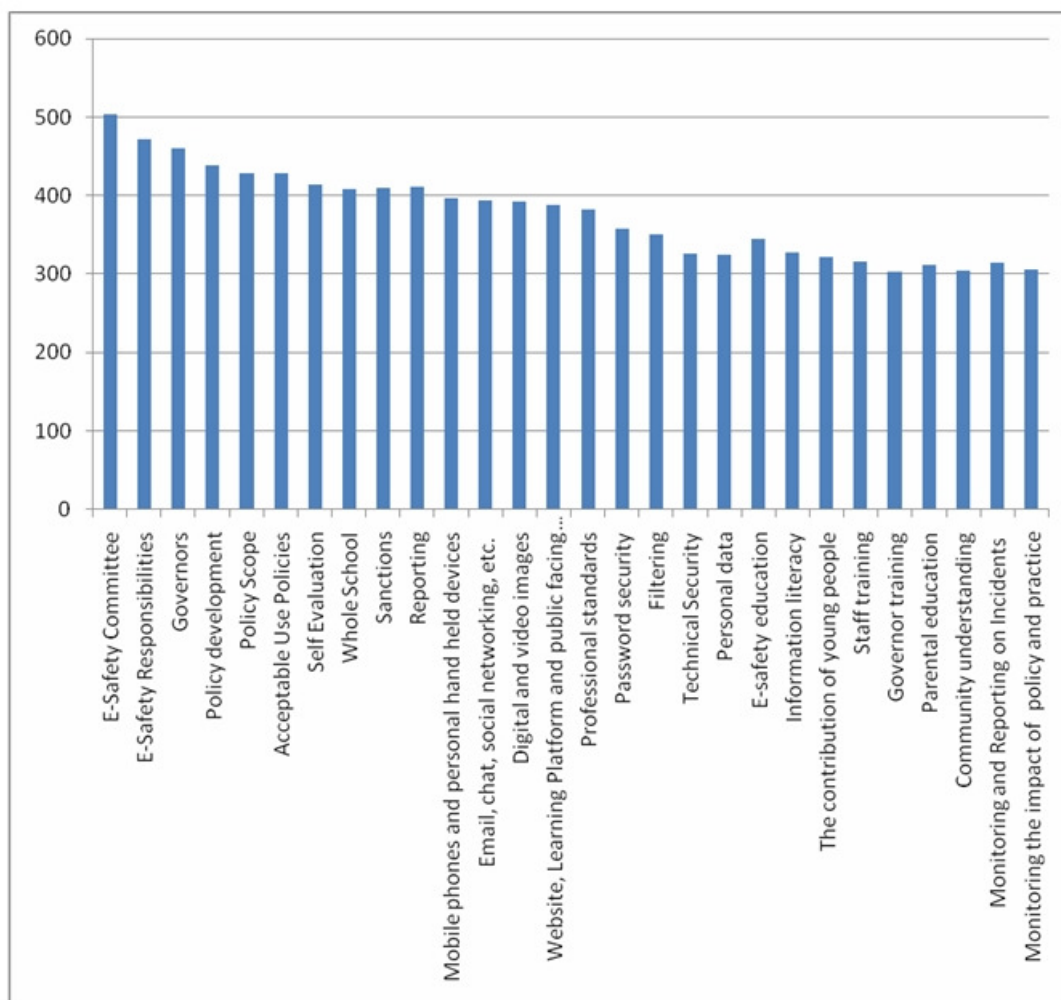


Figure 5 - Aspect frequency

The aspects are ordered as they appear in the self review tool and the pattern presented shows that most establishments will undertake a linear approach to completing the self review. There is a fairly consistent drop in aspect frequency depending on how late they appear in the review. It should be noted that the tool can be used in a non-linear manner, but it would suggest from this figure that this is not used by the majority of establishments.

Given the variability in the number of establishments carrying out specific aspects of self review, the focus of analysis of performance against each one is carried out independent of establishment profile - i.e. each aspect is looked at in isolation. Analysis at establishment level is carried out later in this report. However, exploration of aspects is extremely valuable in examining online safety policy and practice across the country, given the breadth of responding establishments in terms of geography and “type”.

However, we acknowledge that it is likely that the respondents who have embarked on an online safety self review are likely to be more engaged in such than those who have not yet. Therefore, we present the data with the assumption that this may be better than average if it were possible to analyse performance in all educational establishments in the country.

Each aspect can be rated by the self reviewing establishments on a progressive maturity scale from 5 (lowest rating) and 1 (highest). In all cases analysis of the aspect ratings shows an across establishment maximum rating of 1 and minimum of 5. Therefore, in order to determine cross-establishment performance, average scores – for each rating are used to measure areas of strength and weakness in online safety policy and practice. Figure 6 illustrates overall averages across aspects:

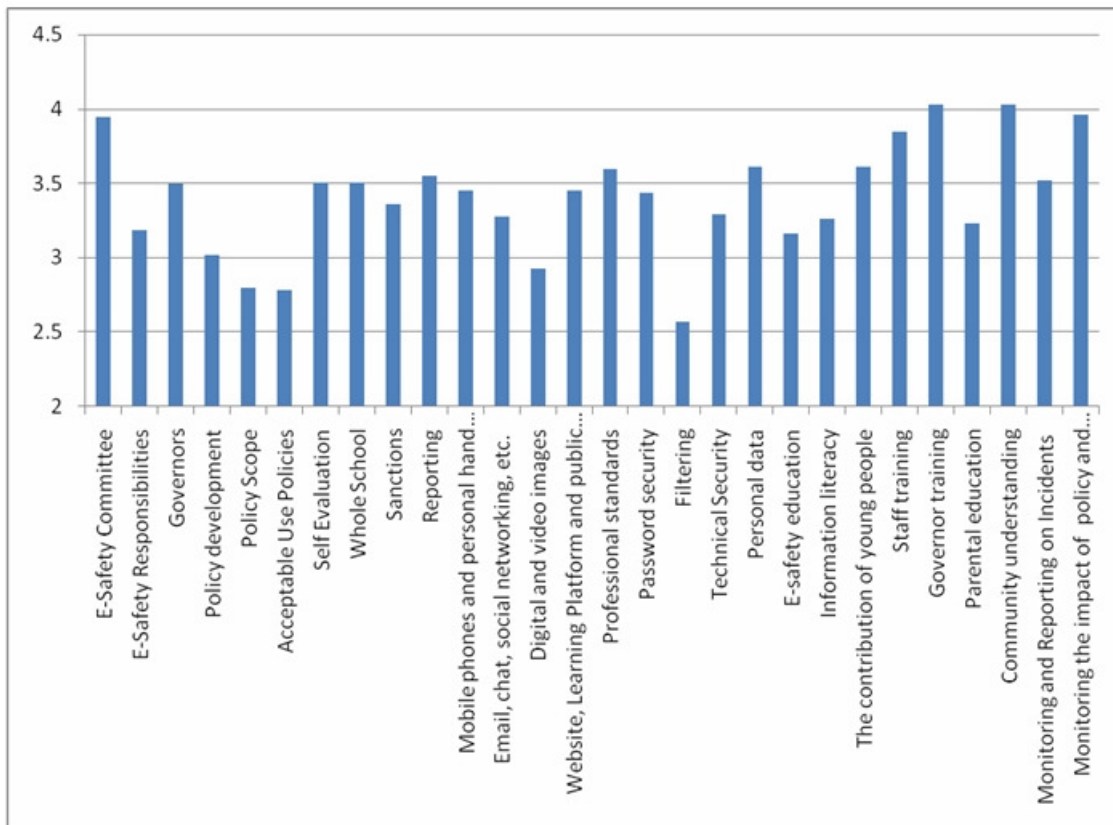


Figure 6 - Average ratings per aspect

The top 5 aspects across establishments are:

- Filtering (2.57)
- Acceptable Use Policies (2.78)
- Policy Scope (2.8)
- Digital and video images (2.93)
- Policy development (3.02)

All of the highest rated aspects centre on either technical or policy (i.e. documentary) practice. For example, Filtering is generally provided and maintained by an external agency, in the case of SW schools this will be the SWGfL. Even the “Digital and video images” aspect, which does at the higher levels have an expectation of the embracing of such in the curriculum, is very policy centred in the aspect definition.

However, the five lowest rated aspects are all those one might view as being centred on education (i.e. those that require whole school commitment, training, etc.):

- Community understanding (4.03)
- Governor training (4.03)
- Monitoring the impact of policy and practice (3.96)
- E-Safety Committee (3.94)
- Staff training (3.84)

These are all activities that require considerable and consistent resource investment to achieve high ratings - and are all aspects where a document or technical solution will not suffice.

In further exploring performance across establishments, it is useful to consider the standard deviation of each aspect. Standard deviation allows us to measure the “spread” of ratings across establishments. The lower the standard deviation, the more consistent the measure across establishments - i.e. different establishments have given themselves similar scores. A high standard deviation would mean that different establishments were using a broad range of scores for self review. Figure 7 shows the standard deviations across the aspects:

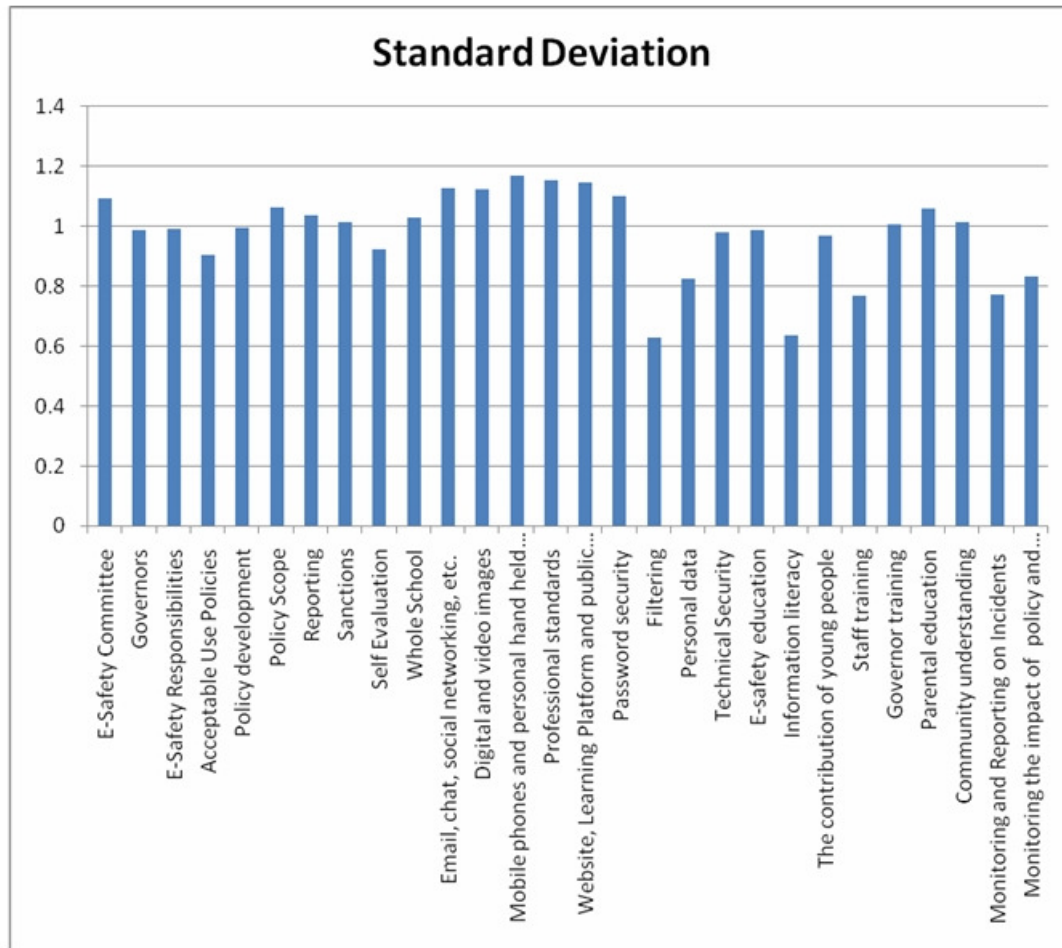


Figure 7 - Standard deviation of aspects

By examining standard deviations alongside averages, we get a richer picture of practice across the country. For example, “Filtering” is by a high average and low standard deviation, which shows that filtering is consistently highly rated across establishments. However, in general filtering does not require much internal resource for the establishment, with most filtering services put in place by the network provider at the school. In contrast, another “high” average- Digital images and video - has a higher standard deviation, which shows that practice is more variable with this particular aspect.

It is more interesting to consider the lower performing aspects against standard deviation. For example, “staff training” is one of the lower aspects on average across establishments. It also has a low standard deviation (0.787).

It can therefore be concluded that staff training is consistently one of the weakest aspects of online safety practice in schools.

Further exploration of online safety policy and practice

The data provided by the tool allows us to explore practice and breakdown the performance based upon different metrics. For example, a comparison of primary and secondary school performance is illustrated in figure 8:

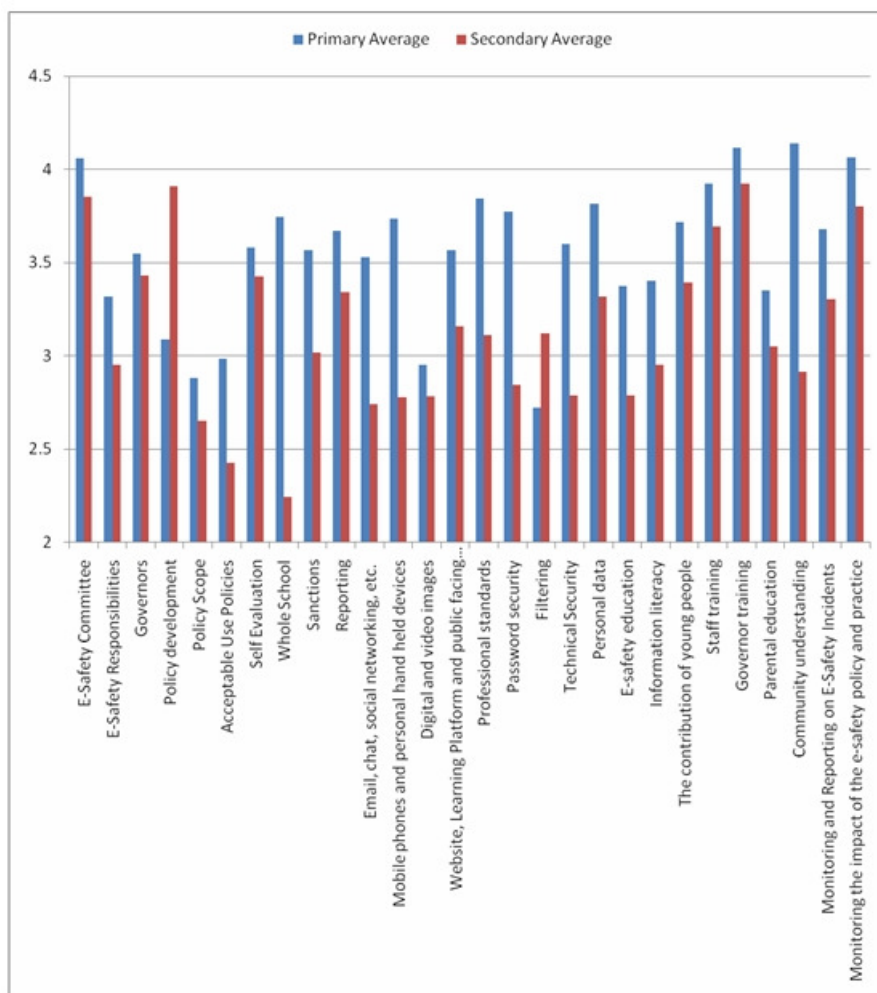


Figure 8 - Primary/secondary comparison on averages

This data shows that primary schools consistently rate themselves lower than secondary schools, apart from two aspects. While it is perhaps not surprising that in primary schools, where generally there is less resource and less room for specialism, the breadth of difference is great in places. In some cases, the average aspect rating can be more than a whole level. The most significant comparisons are:

- Whole School (1.5 difference)
- Community understanding (1.23)
- Mobile phones and personal hand held devices (0.96)
- Password security (0.93)
- Technical Security (0.81)

Mobile phones and hand held devices might not be too much of a surprise, given the assumption in many primary schools that their pupils do not have mobile devices. However, it is clear that mobile ownership (particularly at KS2 level) is increasing in primary schools. Two of the other aspects (Password Security and Technical Security) both have a requirement for technical expertise in the establishment which, again, can sometimes be lacking in smaller schools. The two aspects which show the largest divide between primary and secondary schools, whole school and community understanding, both require buy-in and wider involvement from multiple stakeholders both without and outside of the school.

Place Analysis

The final exploration of the data breaks performance into different local authority areas. The aim of this analysis is not to compare performance of different authorities but to determine areas of consistency and disparity in more depth. While standard deviation allows a measure of performance spread across the whole profile database, by breaking into local authority areas, we are able to look at a more fine grain level at practice.

Not all local authorities who have establishments returning responses to the 360 database are represented. Authorities with 5 or more establishments are included in the analysis and are presented in the radar plot in figure 9. This complex graph illustrates the areas where practice is consistently rated as stronger or weaker, such as filtering and acceptable usage policy, or community education or staff training. However, areas that are viewed as “weakest” in the overall analysis can be far more fragmented at a finer level, such as governor training and e-safety committee.

In addition, there are many aspects that are very variable in performance (for example, sanctions, e-safety education and parental engagement).

However, in terms of overall “shape”, it is interesting to note that there is a consistent pattern to the majority of aspects, with strengths in policy and infrastructure, with weaker performance in education and standards. This is clarified in figure 10, which shows the “strongest” and “weakest” local authorities, as well as an “average” value comprising of cumulative averages across all local authorities. The shape remains fairly consistent in each measure.

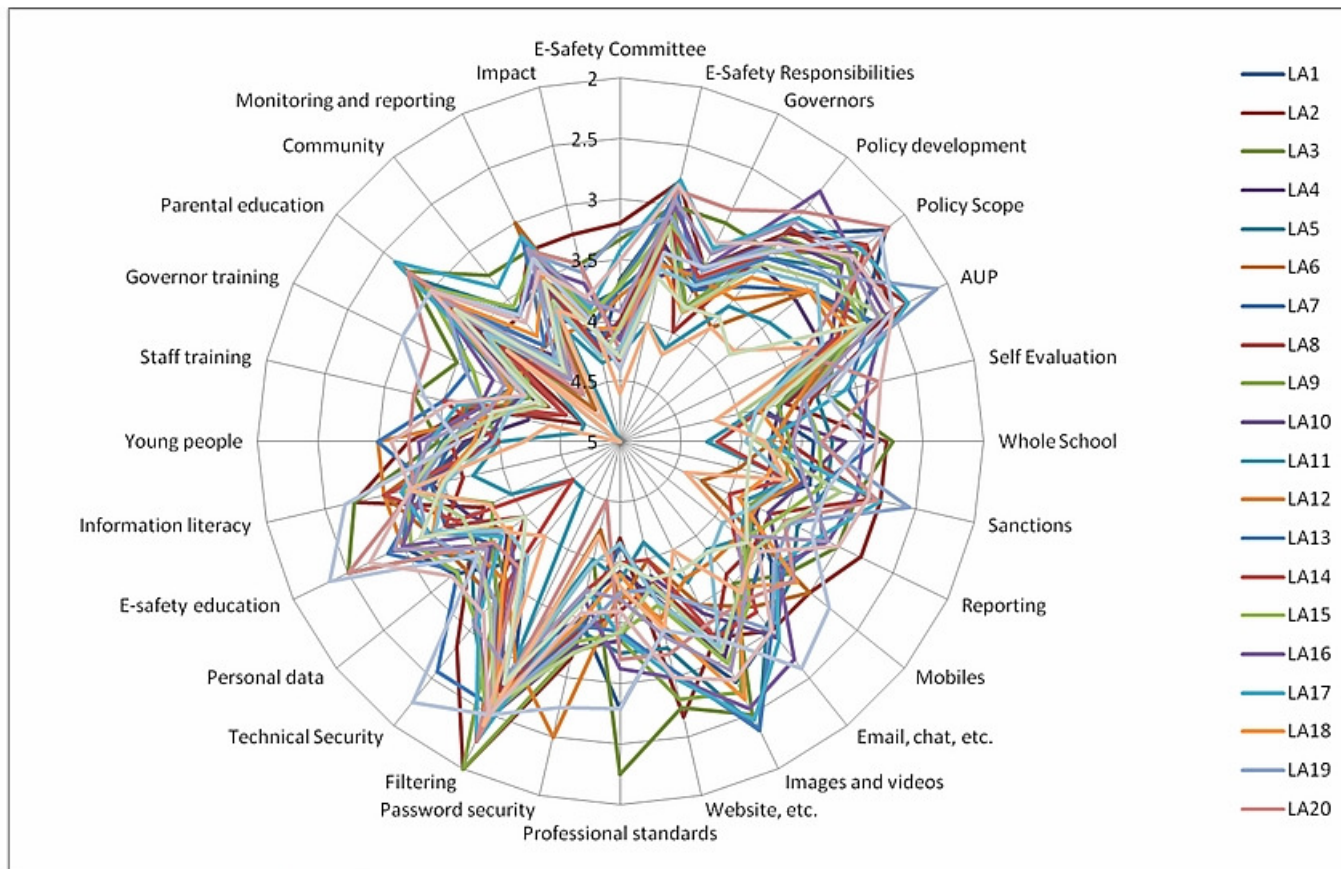


Figure 9 - Place analysis to identify areas of consistent practice

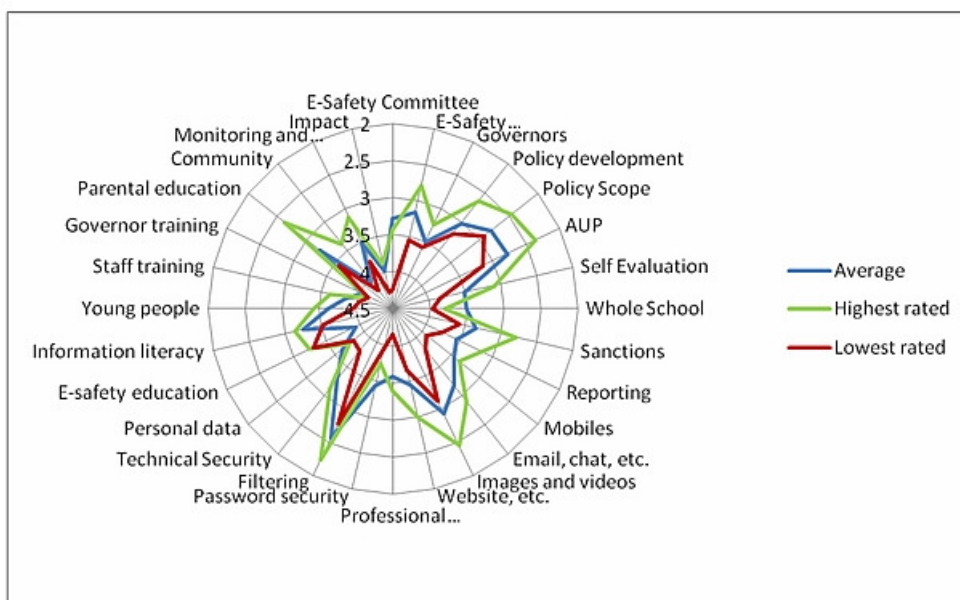


Figure 10 - Comparison of "best" and "worst" locale compared to cumulative average

Neighbourhood Analysis

In our final analysis we consider “neighbourhood” local authorities as a way of considering environmental factors and their impact upon online safety and practice. This analysis uses the BIS ‘Children’s Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking Tool’ which uses a number of local authority metrics (Infant mortality rate, U18 Conception Rate, Number of children Killed or Seriously Injured in Road Traffic Accidents, KS1 % L2+ Reading, KS1 % L2+ Writing)² to group local authorities against these measures.

Using this tool three local authority “clusters” were identified and their performances are presented in figure 11. It is interesting to note the shape of each cluster -the first and third cluster reflect the prevalent “shape” detailed in both figures 9 and 10, with policy and technical infrastructure being areas of strength, dropping away in aspects related to education and standards/inspection. However, the second cluster has a different, broader shape presented. The second cluster represents a number of local authorities who might be considered “urban” - generally city based authorities. The other two clusters represent “rural” and “semi-rural” authorities.

While it would be speculation to explore reasons for this differentiation without further analysis, it does highlight that environmental factors may have an impact on school policy and practice.

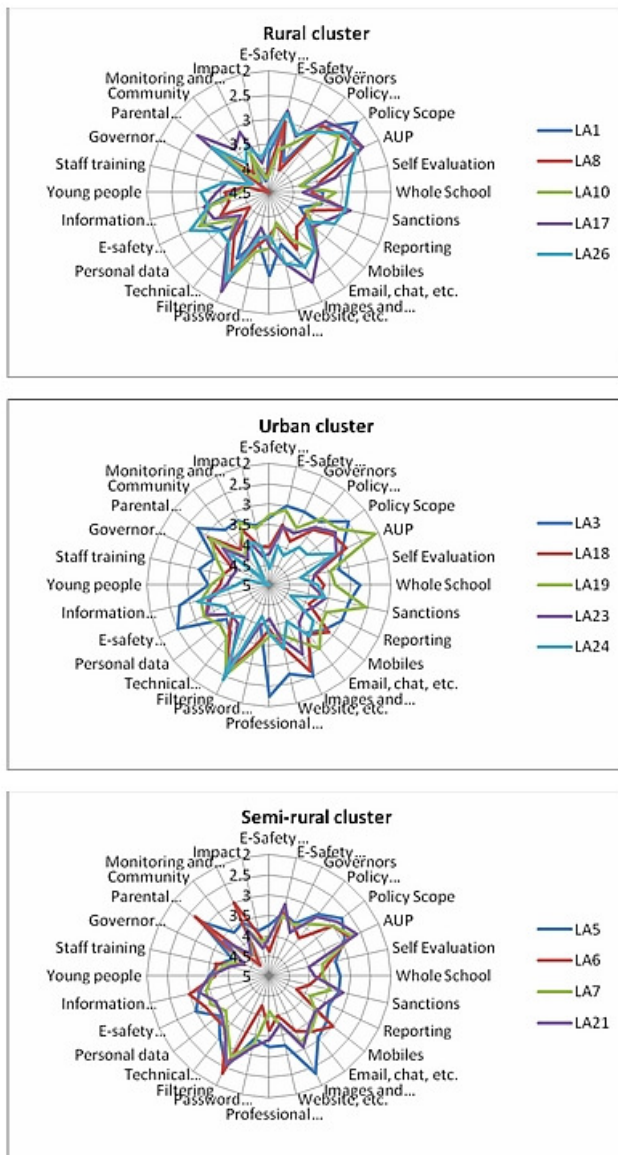


Figure 11 - LA cluster analysis

Summary

This report explores online safety policy and practice in schools across the country using self review data submitted from 547 education establishments. The data was generated, in July 2010, from the SWGfL’s 360degree safe self review tool which has been developed by online safety experts to encompass a whole school approach to online safety that considers aspects from technical infrastructure to measures put in place for the monitoring and reporting of online safety incidents.

The data presents a picture of policy and practice across the country. From these cumulative averages of all submitting establishments, it is possible to identify areas of strength around policy and infrastructure, such as filtering and policy development. However those aspects that one might suggest require longer term and sustained resource to carry out effectively are generally lowest rated. Through exploring the standard deviations of aspect ratings, we can also see areas where performance is consistently stronger (for example, filtering) or consistently weaker (for example, staff training).

By comparing performance between different types of establishments it can be demonstrated that the ratings for online safety in primary schools are lower than those in secondary schools. Again, those resource intensive aspects are generally rated lower, although with primary schools rate themselves lower in technical areas. This is perhaps not surprising, given the difficulties smaller primary schools face in sustaining full time technical support.

By breaking the data into local authority areas we can demonstrate that practice, while variable across different regions, still follows the same pattern of strength in policy and infrastructure, but lacking in areas such as education. Even though there is regional variation the data does suggest that urban settings might have a different pattern.

It is clear from this analysis that educational establishments require targeted support for online safety that meets the needs evident from this report. The issues around online safety are becoming more frequent and complex and schools are often viewed as the organisation best placed to provide online safety guidance and support for young people, staff, parents / carers and the wider community. However, the data suggests that few schools have the knowledge and confidence to fulfil this role.

We consider this data analysis to be the “tip of the iceberg” as far as exploring the nature of online safety policy and practice in schools. With more schools using the tool, the data will become far richer and more detailed analyses will allow a greater understanding of the future issues.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SQL>

² <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000712/index.shtml>

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A pdf of the original report can be downloaded from <http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/Content/News-Articles/Largest-ever-survey-of-E-Safety-in-schools-reveals> while the 360 degree safe online tool can be found at <http://360safe.org.uk/>

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Naace

Our Choice for Our Children - Two Lives or One?

Thank you for editing the entry. This is how the edited entry will appear in the database.

Author: Dr Jason Ohler

The following is the preamble from Jason Ohler's new book, Digital Community, Digital Citizen (Corwin Press, 2010), available through Amazon.com.

We have a fundamental question to address with regards to educating our Digital Age children. How we answer this question will determine how we plan for and implement education in the broadest sense for many years to come. In its simplest form, the question is, Should we consider students to have two lives or one?

Allow me to restate this question with a bit more detail: Should we consider students to have two separate lives—a relatively digital free life at school and a digitally saturated life away from school—or should we consider them to have one life that integrates their lives as students and digital citizens?

The “two lives” perspective contends that our students should live a traditional educational life at school, much like their parents did, and a second, digital life outside school. It says that the technology that kids use is too expensive, problematic, or distracting to integrate into teaching and learning. It says that issues concerning the personal, social, and environmental impacts of living a digital, technological lifestyle are tangential to a school curriculum. Above all, it says that kids will have to figure out how to navigate the digital world beyond school on their own and puzzle through issues of cyber safety, technological responsibility, and digital citizenship without the help of the educational system.

On the other hand, the one life perspective says it is time to help students blend their two lives into an integrated, meaningful approach to living in the digital age. It says that if schools don't make it their primary mission to help students understand not only how to use technology but also when and why, then we have no right to expect our children to grow up to be the citizens we want them to be and that the world needs them to be. It says that if we don't help our digital kids balance personal empowerment with a sense of community responsibility, then future generations will inherit a world that does not represent anyone's dream of what is best for humanity. It says that if we don't understand that schools are exactly the place for kids to learn how to use technology not only effectively and creatively but also responsibly and wisely, then heaven help us all.

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Naace

Our Online Journey- from VLE obscurity to an Online Community

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Author: Matt Brookes, Thingwall Primary School, Wirral

Our journey started in late September 2009, when after attending a VLE training session run by the LA I was hooked and returned to school eager to establish our own. The training session wasn't the first time I'd heard about VLEs, I'd actually written my dissertation on them for my degree just a year earlier. Over the following weeks and months I introduced the VLE to my class who just stoked my enthusiasm as they would go home, login and take part in any activities (however limited at that point) that were available. Since then things have snowballed and at the time of writing this article, there have been 45000 hits to our VLE (excluding the homepage). For a primary school with around 200 pupils, this is a huge amount of hits! Some quarters are still arguing about the need for an online classroom or learning environment, but surely in light of these figures, the questions for our school is what did we do before VLEs and where do we go next?



As the VLE rolled out to the rest of the school, we focused on three ideals: making the experience enjoyable, engaging the children and allowing them to achieve in this online environment.

How can you 'enjoy' an online classroom?

Our starting point was the homepages. Each child in KS2 made their own homepage. Most are familiar with, if not already using social networking sites and so the chance to create one for school purposes was very popular. These did however, highlight a number of e-safety issues: what information should you make available? Who has access to your homepage? Should the children have images of themselves on there? etc. Rather than learning about these things hypothetically, we were able to capitalise on the children's concerns and questions and model how to be responsible with personal information online. Next we began to embed objects from videos and slideshows to other Web 2.0 tools like Wallwishers and RSS feeds, making the most of content and tools already available on the web. Last year, each class assembly was recorded and uploaded to our VLE for parents and children to watch when they had time. At first it seemed that many people didn't know the videos were available, but for the last few assemblies parents would often ask if the video would be available online? At first these videos were just available to the class appearing in them, but at the end of the year we collected them together in an album which is now available to anyone logged in.

Feeding Time Caught on Camera



Well if you've passed through Mrs Metcalfe and Mrs Marsland's room this week you'll have seen that the bird box is a much busier place than it was even last week. The chicks are growing quickly and from the looks of it are very hungry! In this video you can see the chick's mum and dad returning to feed the chicks with caterpillars and other tasty grubs as well as them cleaning up after the recent arrivals.

BLUE TIT CHICKS- ONE WEEK ON!

Our baby blue tits are now about one week old and so far, 6 chicks still survive. They have really grown since the last video was taken and look a lot more like little birds now. You can see their tiny wings and feathers.

The most noticeable part of the chicks though is their large gaping mouth- these would be bright yellow if we could see them in colour. When the adult birds approach the nest, they instinctively open their "gapes" in expectation of being fed.

We have been watching both adult birds feed the chicks with grubs and insects, some of which seem too large for them to swallow!

During the Spring term, we were fortunate to have two special visitors to our school, two blue tits moved into our bird box! This year though, we'd fitted the bird box with a webcam and were able to see the birds as they created the nest, laid their eggs and as the eggs cracked open. We created a birdcam blog to hold updates, pictures and videos of the birds' progress and even pictured them as they flew the nest for the first time. This sounds great, but without an online environment we wouldn't have been able to share

these videos and information with the school and wider community. We even attracted a visitor from Fiji, the daughter of a member of staff who had heard about the amazing footage we'd been able to capture. Around the same time we also had a number of chicken eggs in an incubator, until one hatched (a friend arrived courtesy of the farmer to keep him company). In the same way we were able to create a 'chick feed' to keep the children updated with their progress. After a few weeks, this area of our VLE tracked the eggs' progress from the incubator to their return to the farm where they were first laid. Along the way the children, suggested and eventually voted to name the chicks.

BLUE TITS LEAVE NEST

After just over 2 weeks, the little chicks were definitely getting ready to fly the nest! In the last video we took, you can clearly see them stretching their wings and getting their muscles ready for flight.

On Thursday morning, the adult bird started to perch high above the nest and began to call loudly to the chicks, encouraging them to leave the nest for the first time. Amazingly, Mrs Metcalfe and her Year 5 maths group then watched as one brave little bird flew out of the nest and landed in the bush on the opposite side of the quadrangle. For the rest of the day, it sat in the bush, calling loudly to its parents to come and feed it. They seemed to ignore it and concentrate on the other 5 chicks still in the nest who were not quite so brave.

Thankfully, when we came to school on Friday morning, all 6 chicks had left the nest and were hopping about all over the floor and bushes in the quadrangle. The parents were coming in regularly with food for them and it was really sweet to see the chicks close up through the windows. Mr Brooks took these cute photographs of the chicks out of the nest.

Our chick gets a friend

Mrs Metcalfe (THING_hmetcalfe) 12 May 2010 13:47

Despite our best efforts, we only managed to hatch one chick from the eggs in our incubator. It would appear that most of them were not fertile.

So, our little chick was very lonely. Fortunately, the man in charge of Tam O'Shanter Farm brought us a second chick from the farm to look after so the first one would not be lonely.

The new chick was born on Saturday 8 May, so is actually younger, but as you may be able to tell from these photos, it looks bigger. He is yellow all over, whereas our chick is yellow with brown streaks on its back. They are obviously different breeds.

At first, they really didn't like each other, but now, they seem to be getting on well. They love to cuddle up to Tigger in their pen!

Keep on thinking of names for these 2 chicks- we will decide at the end of the week what they are going to be called!!



zone and learning zone. The staffroom contains links to resources, login details for Web 2.0 websites and links to 'how to' videos. Parents can use their 'zone' to access other websites to help their children with their homework, learn their spellings and times tables, highlighting other areas of our VLE and read our twitter feed. In addition, we have an area dedicated to the after school clubs that we run which includes what times they run from and to and more information for children who are interested in joining.

The screenshot shows the Thingwall Primary School website. The main content area features a blog post titled "THOR AND FLUFFY GO TO THE FARM..." by Mrs Metcalfe (THING_hmetcalfe) dated 25 May 2010 18:58. The text describes how two chicks, Thor and Fluffy, were brought to the school from Tam O'Shanter Farm. A photograph shows two chicks, one yellow and one grey, in a pen. The website also has a sidebar with navigation links like Home page, News, Calendar, and a Learning Zone.

You may be saying to yourself "great, but you could do all this with a website". This was something we were aware of and determined to address. The power of VLEs is not in their presentation capabilities (like those didactic Web 1.0 sites) but rather in their power to connect users (children, staff, etc); empower them to choose their own learning path and collaborate with others along the way.

Engaging Our School Community

Our second focus was engaging the different members of the school community. To help with this, we set up an online staffroom, governor zone, parent

The Learning Zone was only added recently, but has been really popular. Anyone working in a school knows the frantic pace at which the days seem to pass and therefore sometimes teachers don't get round to

updating their class' homepage with links for a new topic, for instance. The Learning Zone contains hundreds of links to great sites and resources, covering most of the curriculum and beyond! For example, you can link to sites that can help with understanding fractions, friction or even learning some French or Spanish. We also embedded a daily Sudoku challenge for children into one page, that changes daily and without any intervention from a member of staff. If Sudoku isn't for them, the children can take a trip around historical world sites via Google maps or track flights travelling around the world on an air-traffic control style map. There's also a page dedicated to online games and puzzles.

One major way of engaging the children has been our fortnightly Questions of the Week. This idea came from another school who used their blog to pose questions to their children each week. The questions so far have ranged from, 'what do you enjoy about our school?' to 'what would you like to ask Roald Dahl?' to 'where and what do you dream of being when you are older?' All of which resulted in some great responses from the children and staff! One child answered that when they were older they want to be a granddad. Another, wants to be a 'famous skateboarder and travel around the USA in an RV'. Two of the most popular Questions of the Week, saw fire fighters from our local fire station answer the children's questions. This was a result of a competition in which we'd been invited to suggest names for a new fire engine. We used the VLE to record the children's suggestions and forwarded them to the fire officers. Unfortunately, we didn't come up with the name they chose (Sparkey!) but the response impressed the fire officers who agreed to take part in our forum. We also invited a paramedic whose children come to our school to answer the children's questions, most of which centred around the more gory details of his job, as I'm sure you can imagine! In between running Questions of the Week, we posted a Maths Challenge for the children to try and answer. Some can be answered with a little brain power, others are more complicated. This was intentional as the challenges were aimed to encourage the children to involve their parents, older brothers and sisters etc, to work them out. They also had to be 'un-Googleable', which was the perhaps the most difficult part.

The World Cup in South Africa again, provided a great opportunity to utilise the VLE features. This time though, a team of reporters were recruited and granted editing rights to the group. Over the course of the tournament, a commentary team recorded match summaries for the more high profile games and each game from the quarter-finals stage onwards. We certainly have a few budding John Motsons, who relished the opportunity to describe the build-up play leading to the "GOOOOALLL!!" Our 'chief reporter' ensured that the fixtures page was updated with all the latest scores too. The rest of the school were able to contribute too, in a forum area where they could post their reactions to matches they had watched- the England team took the most flack, unfortunately. To minimise the amount of time needed to keep the site up to date, we embedded a number of Fifa's RSS feeds into pages, providing the latest England team and wider tournament news. In another area the children could locate each of the stadiums on an embedded Google map and using the Street View feature, could place themselves in and around the different stadiums.

It may be important to note at this point, that we didn't look to create endless amounts of new projects just to use the VLE. Rather, it was about giving what would have taken place an extra dimension. One example of this is as we collected Tesco and Sainsbury's vouchers we posted our weekly total to a page on the VLE. As the end of the schemes approached, forums were added with a link to the respective catalogues, allowing the children to post suggestions of how they would like to see the vouchers used. An RSS feed for our newsletters, allows parents to see when a new edition is published, meaning they don't miss out on important school news, just in case the newsletter is lost somewhere between school and getting home!



World Cup 2010 Stadiums



What can you achieve in an 'online classroom'?

So far all of the above were school-wide projects. At a class level, each class homepage holds a number of links relevant to topics being covered. A quick snippet from each year group will hopefully reveal how our classrooms are becoming far more than what they have been in the past:

- Year 1 used forums to find out how many ways the children could make ten and the names of the children's favourite teddy bears.
- Year 2 created an 'all about me' postcard that was sent to their new Year 3 teacher, giving information about the children's family, pets, interests and unique abilities (it's amazing how many of them can touch their nose with their tongue)!
- Year 3 have been using the VLE to help with their times tables. The children were asked to post the times tables that they find hardest to learn and think a way of remembering it.
- Year 4 used a series of web links to research different aspects of life in Tudor times and record their work collaboratively on wikis. They then reviewed each group's wiki and built up a rich picture of Tudor life based on their friend's research.
- While Year 5 were studying Ancient Greece, Percy Jackson was conveniently released and over half term as the children went to see the film they wrote reviews about it for others to read in their forum. A myth writing competition also provided a perfect chance for the children to vote in a survey for their favourite myth writer in class.
- Year 6 are currently watching tweets from the UK war cabinet during World War II, thanks to the National Archives. The tweets give a stark snapshot of the dilemmas and choices that were faced each day during the war, and allow the children to follow links to see the group's actual documents online- fascinating!

A notable omission from this list is the youngest class in our school, FS2. Although, logging into the VLE may

be tricky for them to do alone, with their parents they can follow their class blog from their first day in school onwards.

The above shows just some of the uses of our VLE. One of the most powerful though, is pointing children in the direction of online resources, activities and sites that either help give them the extra confidence and support they need to understand something they haven't quite understood in school, or to develop their learning further using their own desire to find out more. If we're looking to develop a lifelong learner, who knows how to search for, find, evaluate and interpret information for themselves, then using a VLE can certainly play a major role in this. Achievement comes with the children's use of the VLE to personalise their learning experience and use the different tools to collaborate with one another to share and reflect on their learning.

Visiting our site you'll see that we signed up to Becta's Next Generation Learning charter. In fact the urgency for pedagogy and our education system itself is very real for this generation, never mind the next. Whether you agree with the 'digital natives' and 'digital migrants', the fact is that children now have had exposure to far more technology than we had when we were younger. But for those teachers that aren't familiar with RSS feeds, Web 2.0, embedding resources and so on, I can see why setting up and using a VLE can be daunting. I firmly believe that many teachers would benefit from seeing the effective use of VLEs modelled by their LA. For the most part, the above looks at collaboration at a school level but the potential of using VLEs at LA level is just as significant. Why not have an area for ICT subject leaders to share ideas, or a library of online resources that teachers from across the LA can contribute to? Why not create a Wallwisher for CPD with suggestions or a poll to measure what staff from across the LA feel they need more training on? The impact of safeguarding means that lots of great practice is kept within the confines of VLEs and only accessible with login details. It would be great for such practice to be shared more readily and indeed, I believe this is where LAs could and should play a major part.

I have been fortunate to be able to work with UniServity, the provider of our VLE and a group of other teachers to develop the next generation of VLE: the Life Learning Cloud. While this is not a marketing exercise, I and the other members of the group have been encouraged that the emphasis of the development of "Life", is focused on learning and it removes the technical challenges that can sometimes put our colleagues off using them. Hopefully, this will mean that teachers with varying technical abilities can harness the power of the 'online classroom' to enrich the learning and teaching process.

A final thought to anyone trying to develop the use of a VLE in school is that the most powerful agent for change is by far the children. The impact one child can have on their teacher by asking for a website or resource to be linked/uploaded to the VLE is far greater than a nagging colleague!

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Reflections on BSF – and the way ahead for ICT in schools

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Author: Roger Broadie

Cancellation of the BSF (Building Schools for the Future) programme will have significant impact on ICT in schools. To work out the implications and the best way for schools to proceed, it would be wise to reflect on the ways in which BSF worked in practice and why.

This is a personal reflection based on many discussions and meetings I have been privileged to be party to throughout the whole period in which BSF has flowered and died. Though it is necessary to present the critical view, my aim is to see through the criticisms to the situation as it really was and is. There is a tendency amongst those involved with ICT in Education to wear rose-tinted glasses and to be evangelical, which can be good for generating enthusiasm but which can also leave one blind to the perspectives others see.

What was BSF?

BSF was actually about renewing communities using money for new schools as the lever. The Labour government saw the very real problems of communities in its heartlands, knew that a big initiative spending lots of money was politically necessary to address this, and latched onto school re-building as the core sum of money around which to build the initiative. In the early days of BSF there was a lot of rhetoric about LAs (local authorities) combining budget streams from sources other than education with BSF funding, in order to regenerate whole communities.

But the government also had another problem, which was finding the money without the spend ending up on the government's own borrowing. This is the whole PFI saga which you will be well aware of if you are a subscriber to Private Eye, and which is now coming home to roost in some regions of the Health Service. In 2005 I was party to several meetings arranged by a large London legal firm, who were touting for the contract work with the finance institutions interested in funding BSF. Key memories from that time are of the quality of the buffet at the meetings, the way PFS (Partnerships for Schools) was pushing the idea that building contractors would get good economies of scale by getting the contracts to run several Local Education Partnerships, and the realisation from listening to the bankers that the absolute driving force behind BSF was going to be the contractually assured percentage financial return that the money-lenders would get.

I am sure others will dissect the rationale for Local Education Partnerships so I will not do that here. The key practical point is that the decision was made that the money would flow through LAs and their LEP, not to individual schools. What were the issues around ICT in BSF that flowed from this?

ICT in BSF

The emotive political driver was school buildings desperately in need of re-building and refurbishment. It is to the great credit of all who had influence, that ICT was hard-wired into BSF with nominally 10% of the funding going to the ICT. On the back of this tangible success, rhetoric was built that ICT may only be going to be 10% of the funding but would be responsible for 90% of the transformation. Though this message made some headway it never really got through to the money-men and the builders, leaving ICT somewhat on the coat-tails of the buildings side of BSF. But that is history - ICT was going to be a key part of BSF so the question was how?

The 80:20 rule was central to answering this. Perhaps 20% of secondary schools can procure and manage their ICT effectively and economically but 80% struggle to varying degrees. This led to the concept of ICT managed services, which I was assured was absolutely 'non-negotiable' with ministers. And indeed for the 80% it is a sensible way to ensure 24/7/365 reliability where the service required of the technology can be completely described in a 5-year service level agreement. But it was taken too far into areas of technology that are rapidly changing, where understanding of how to best use it in schools is still developing - such as mobile end-user devices. Unless the LA and contractor were creative in how they interpreted the managed service contract it could be constraining to development. One of the very surprising differences between LAs in BSF was the percentage of the ICT funding that was left in the local choice fund for future developments, varying from a frighteningly low 10% to 50%-60% in a few LAs.

There was rightly huge contention, and in quite a number of LAs conflict with schools, about the managed service being procured at LA level. Schools in the 20% were managing to procure their own version of managed services. Contracts for networks, broadband, PCs and platforms can be procured as managed services, with appropriate levels of service for the different elements/systems they need but with the school having much more control than they could exercise over the LA managed service. In practice the development capacity of the 20% who could procure and manage their own ICT was being sacrificed in BSF to help the 80%. There were some very memorable exchanges in a Westminster Education Forum when Notre Dame School publicly stated the difficulties they were having with their LA and PFS in order to be allowed to have the ICT they wanted. In some cases the BSF ICT LA-wide managed service is a backward step for some of the 20% of ICT-competent schools, in terms of what those schools value - particularly flexibility to

develop.

The post-BSF question

The central post-BSF ICT question we have to ask is how to ensure secondary schools have 100% 24/7/365 ICT, because without that teachers cannot be expected to adopt and embed ICT to transform learning. The requirement for primary schools is a different discussion; though the case is developing why ICT is mission-critical in primary schools it is in my view not yet fully made. In secondary schools just the organisation and administration of the school demand effective ICT, in addition to the curriculum demands.

In answering this question we must accept that there is a whole spectrum of schools. At one end there are schools with excellent vision that have ensured they have the staff to assess, plan, procure and manage ICT with almost no external advice. At the other end of the spectrum there are schools with almost no leadership vision and very poor ability to procure and manage ICT. The rest of the schools are a normal distribution in between, meaning that the vast majority need some level of advice and help, to check that they know what they are talking about with regard to ICT and how it catalyses transformation, and to help them plan and negotiate procurement of 100% reliable ICT.

BSF inefficiencies and conflicts

To get back to reflections on BSF, it was the fact that the BSF answer was to make the money and advice flow through the LA that caused one of the major inefficiencies of BSF. There is a triangular relationship in BSF of school-LA-LEP (Local Education Partnership). For ease of reading and understanding I'm going to refer to LEPs as the 'contractor'. Even if a LEP works well it is fundamentally driven by 'affordability' and the need to achieve commercial profit. The financial contractual relationship is between the LA and the contractor, while the customer and service relationship is between the individual school and the contractor. If there are problems with the service the school has to work through the LA to put financial penalties on the contractor.

The role of the LA is further confused in that BSF saw the LA as the provider of the ICT in Education advice to schools (with or without external consultants supporting the LA), able to agree with its schools what the ICT managed service should provide, as well as the LA being the contracting partner. You will note there is a conflict of interest here, if the school who is the customer who will make use of the service does not agree with the advice that the LA is providing and has a different view of what is needed from the service that the LA contracts with the contractor.

The devil is in the detail that must be agreed post-consultation. Even with good LA-school consultation, the contractor must meet with the LA to do the detailed matching of customer need to affordable solution. The agreed managed service must then be presented to the school by the contractor, who will be responsible for what is implemented and the service levels. The LA may be party to this discussion but as it is they who must finally sign up to the commercials, they cannot afford to let themselves be driven by different views that a school may have. Practically the school-contractor meeting cannot discuss actual costs because that could damage the LA's ability to commercially negotiate. The school may be only concerned with itself while the LA has to be concerned about the area-wide educational offering. Herein lies the fundamental educational conflict in BSF; the school requirement and the LA requirement are fundamentally different, the school having responsibility to its pupils and parents while the LA has responsibility for the educational provision in the whole authority. It may require nobility and selfless-ness for school leaders to sign up to an LA vision that damages the school's pre-eminence and provision for its own pupils, or even its existence.

It is noticeable in comments from Headteachers in the Times Educational Supplement about pursuing academy status, that some appear most concerned for their own school while others are most concerned about the educational provision for the whole community.

At the core of the process to acquire reliable ICT meetings must happen for:

- The school to obtain advice about the best ICT solution to fit their vision.
- The contractor to propose a service to provide this.
- A financial contract to be negotiated and signed.

In BSF this meant:

- The LA advises/consults with the school.
- The contractor proposes an affordable solution to the LA.
- Once agreed with the LA the contractor presents the solution to the school.
- If the school agrees the financial contract is negotiated and signed between the LA and the contractor.

The extra meetings the contractor undertakes will of course be added to the price in BSF but it is not a great overhead if the process works well. And using the LA to advise the school may well be cheaper than funding the school to hire its own consultants to provide advice. But where there is disagreement the BSF process can be tortuous and very costly. In the future it appears likely that schools will need to acquire their own ICT advice and it remains to be seen whether

this will be funded in whatever approaches to capital spending succeed BSF.

“Economy of scale” issues

At this point, let us consider the ‘economies of scale’ in BSF that the government hoped would reduce costs and bring into play the other LA budgets, enabling BSF spend on schools to impact on the whole community. The conflicts here are that this really means:

- From the LA side, put the benefit of the whole community ahead of the needs of the individual school and its sub-section of the community.
- From the contractor side make sure provide buildings and ICT solutions that are already designed rather than design to suit individual need - putting it at its rawest and acknowledging that the more successful contractors do tailor their products to individual need.

Politically we have conflicts here:

- That the core purpose of education is in danger of getting lost against the role of schools in the community and their social services roles.
- That the need to ensure best value in the spending of public money conflicts with the independence of schools and the rhetoric on personalisation.

Finance and risk

The final major inefficiency in BSF is the need to use finance providers to avoid the government borrowing more. Financiers may pay lip-service to the need to help education, but the bottom line is the percentage return on the money advanced. It is fairly easy to arrange this in a one-off sale just through good negotiation, but much harder where a continuing managed service is involved. Even for initial purchase things can go wrong, particularly when a supply-chain is involved. For the ICT managed service to provide the agreed service, first there is the network infrastructure work in the building, done by the building contractors, then there is the M&E (mechanical and electrical) work for power, probably done by another contractor, then the ICT devices may be being used with FFE (furniture, fittings and equipment) provided by yet another contractor, and as BSF contracts are led by builders, the ICT managed service is also part of the supply chain, coming from a company contracting to the LEP or prime contractor.

As the funders want to be assured of their % return, wherever there is a risk of having to spend money if something goes wrong or a contractor fails to deliver to contract, the contractual terms have to allow for the money needed to correct this to be clawed back from somewhere. This necessitates a huge amount of time checking that the work and standards of the different components from different sub-contractors all match up and that all this is legally nailed down in the contracts. While individual schools no doubt wish to have contracts with suppliers that are as watertight as possible, their approach to risk can be much more flexible. Suppose some furniture is being procured on which to place computers, the school does not need to have a legal contract that defines how the furniture and computers will work together, ensuring the computers have the right length power lead to reach the plug and that the spacings for keyboard and monitor are adequate; they just have to be sure of this themselves from the separate specs provided and take the risk. And if they make a mistake and something doesn't work properly in the future, they have capacity to invent work-arounds without having to enshrine contractually who will pay to rectify errors.

And so to the future

To move to the future, where does this leave schools now?

It appears that we are moving into a world where it will be the responsibility of individual schools to procure the ICT advice and solutions they need and to manage these, internally or through service contracts.

This is the same position that businesses are in. If ICT is critical to the success of the business the company makes very sure they either have the expertise in-house to ensure the ICT reliably does what they need it to do, and to tailor and develop it to get competitive advantage. Or they buy this expertise in and put up with a rather more standard solution, but one that will do at least the basics.

Schools, whether or not they engage with government initiatives and manage to secure any extra funding that might be available, will have to themselves consider the issues that were central to BSF and come to conclusions:

1. Is 100% reliable ICT important or critical to the future operation and competitive advantage of the school? (The BSF conclusion was that it is mission-critical.)
2. Should the school consider its needs as an individual organisation as pre-eminent, or should it be driven by the needs of the whole community and therefore operate in close partnership with neighbouring schools? (The BSF conclusion was that community needs were pre-eminent.)
3. Does the school have the necessary vision to know what is needed, either as an individual organisation or as part of a partnership if that is their choice? If not, what help is needed to develop this vision? (The BSF conclusion was that the majority of schools did not themselves have clarity of vision, and that where they did it was necessary that this

be denied if it conflicted with the whole-community vision.)

4. Does the school have the necessary expertise to procure the ICT it needs, and if not where can this expertise be gained? (The BSF conclusion was that schools are not competent to do this and that LAs should be the source of advice.)
5. Does the school have the necessary internal expertise to manage the ICT systems it procures for 24/7/365 reliability, or has it the competence to manage a number of different managed service contracts that provide guaranteed service levels. Or should it procure a complete managed service that takes control of all of the ICT infrastructure and systems in the school? (The BSF conclusion was the latter of these.)

The big open question is whether schools will decide, as was decided in BSF, that ICT is mission-critical to their future. Only if they decide that it is are they likely to bother answering the other questions properly.

As schools are a normal distribution and given the way the 20% have made their views on the importance of ICT known as BSF has progressed, and given that several BSF programmes are proceeding, we are going to have a significant group of schools that see their ICT as giving them competitive advantage, however they define that (as truly competitive or as properly fulfilling their community role). There will probably be a similar sized group at the other end of the spectrum that takes little notice of ICT or fails in its implementation such that it is not adopted and embedded. The majority of schools will be in the middle and the national pendulum will swing one way or the other over time.

BSF provided a drive external to schools to adopt and embed ICT and that would force them to at least have 24/7/365 reliable ICT. Now that BSF will not be introduced to new areas, if Naace members wish there to be a clear and visible national statement that it is imperative for schools to adopt and embed ICT, and an external drive to push schools in this direction, it will have to come from somewhere else.

If it does not come from government, the only other similar-scale forces in the country that are external to schools and that might do this are educators as a professional community, LAs and local communities, industry and parents - with national press and TV having a critical role in driving public perceptions.

Which will be most likely to replace BSF in promoting ICT in Education?

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Sheffield Learning Journey: Final Report October 2010

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Sheffield Learning Journey 2009-10 Final Report*

The Sheffield Learning Journey Project was set up to develop teachers' ability to select, integrate and apply web 2.0 tools across the curriculum, in order to enhance learning, engage pupils and establish a community of practice in this area.

Introduction

Rationale for project

The main focus of the Sheffield Learning Journey Project was to develop teachers' ability to select, integrate and apply web 2.0 tools across the curriculum, in order to enhance learning, engage pupils and establish a community of practice in this area. The project stemmed in part from Sheffield Borough Council's priority aim to:

"achieve consistent year on year improvements to educational attainment at a faster rate than the national average, and to make particularly strong progress in the foundation and primary stages and in English and Maths."

Although the various tools chosen by teachers were accessed using technology, this was not an ICT project, but rather, sought to extend learning opportunities and develop teachers' knowledge and confidence in embedding ICT in learning.

Web 2.0 tools enable users to communicate and collaborate online using a wide range of freely or cheaply available creative applications. This includes many tools already securely available through schools' Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and provided by Regional Broadband Consortia (RBCs). Alongside cheaper online access through mobile devices, this opens up a myriad of learning tools and learning communities to both children and teachers. This project aimed to introduce teachers and children to these new possibilities, while providing opportunities to investigate, share and build on their knowledge and confidence in using them in a range of learning contexts.

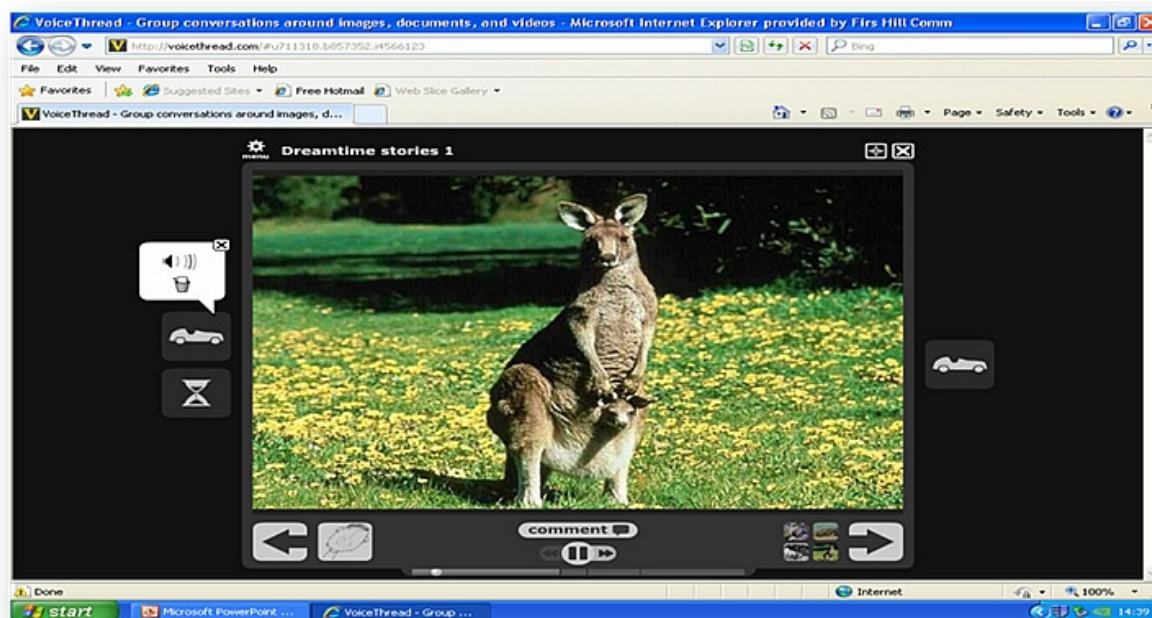
This project was run by Educational ICT Services Ltd (EdICTs), on behalf of Sheffield City Council. EdICTs consultants Emma Asprey and Jim Gardner worked with Diane Stokes, School Improvement Advisor, to organise, deliver and evaluate the project. They were supported periodically by Andrew Bush, Senior ICT Consultant, who provided invaluable local and technical expertise.

Structure of the project

The Sheffield Learning Journey Project was a 1 year structured programme of professional development for teachers. An action enquiry approach was employed, to empower the teachers to take a critically reflective view of learning and teaching in their own classrooms. This sustainable approach was designed to give teachers the confidence to continue building their knowledge in this area, and to share it with others, after the initial project had ended.

Exemplar Project Case Studies

1. Firs Hill Community Primary School



Cat Taylor identified Firs Hill's 'Big Write' project as the focus and then chose Voicethread as a tool that had the potential to enhance the children's writing process, with particular emphasis on character and setting development. More specifically,

she aimed to:

- Develop excitement about writing with a particular focus on boys and EAL children;
- Use creative ideas in learning and collaboration;
- Share work between classroom and home;
- Develop progression in literacy planning;
- Ensure differentiation to support lower and higher ability children.

A Pro-Educator Voicethread class account was purchased (\$10) and set up, with Cat as the teacher user and the children each having their own associated usernames. This enabled Cat to oversee the use of the account and ensure safe and responsible behaviour by the children. The children used Voicethread to leave spoken comments in response to images of animal characters and landscapes that could feature in their own Dreamtime stories. They responded to each others' comments and developed their ideas through the spoken record rather than written notes. This record of ideas was then used to produce a written version of the story. In some cases, the stories were also acted out and filmed. These were also shared using Voicethread.

The project generated much enthusiasm and enjoyment amongst the children and staff involved. Cat analysed comments and video posted by the children and carried out interviews with a focus group. She felt that using Voicethread had enhanced the children's ability to use ideas developed through speaking and listening into written stories, some of which were also performed as drama and videoed. The positive impact was particularly noticeable in boys and children with EAL, with the majority of children's work showing an improvement of 1 or 2 sub levels. Cat's final impact evaluation report states that

"Many of the children stated in their interviews that the project gave them more confidence both in their speaking and listening and writing skills. They felt the recording enabled them to know the story they would be telling really well and so they felt able to focus on other areas of their writing that they wouldn't have otherwise. Several children who struggle to share their ideas in the classroom found it much easier to record them onto the computer and allow children to listen back to them."

Cat found that the children shared their ideas more widely within the class and referred back to the Voicethread comments when they got stuck or needed more ideas. She also noticed that some children were more keen to engage in online discussions than verbal, whole class discussions in the classroom. She was surprised to find that the children commented on how the spoken comments helped them with grammar, structure and punctuation, as well as the development of ideas.

The only issue arising from the use of Voicethread was the lack of chronology in the organisation of comments on the screen, making it quite hard to follow the development of ideas from beginning to end. Access to resources and quiet spaces for recording also caused minor problems.

The success of the project has led Cat and other staff to continue the use of Voicethread and spread it throughout the school, including cross-year group projects. They are also considering the use of other web 2.0 tools, including those provided through their VLE. These tools will be used to enhance existing projects across the curriculum, following the approach taken here.

2. Springfield School



Gail Hudson decided a class project on the Vikings could be extended and enlivened and investigated a range of web 2.0 tools, including blogs, wikis, Google Maps and Google Docs. After careful consideration, she chose to use Skype video and Google Sites as the best tools for the job. The main objectives were for the children to apply their research skills to topic based learning and to share the results with others in the school and further afield.

A trip to the Jorvik museum in York would have been the ideal engaging start to the project, but it wasn't financially possible. However, the museum does offer a 'Skype a Viking' service, which Gail thought might be the next best thing. With support from the ICT co-ordinator, a Skype account and webcam were set up and Skype was unblocked through the LA filtering. A 45 minute video conference with a 'Viking' enabled

the children to learn from an expert and engage in informed discussion, using knowledge gained from research to ask questions and interact.

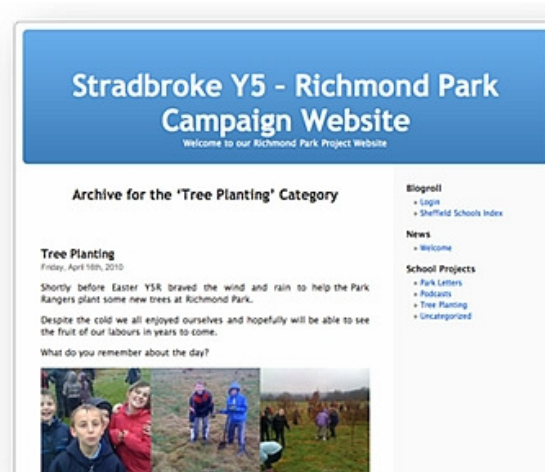
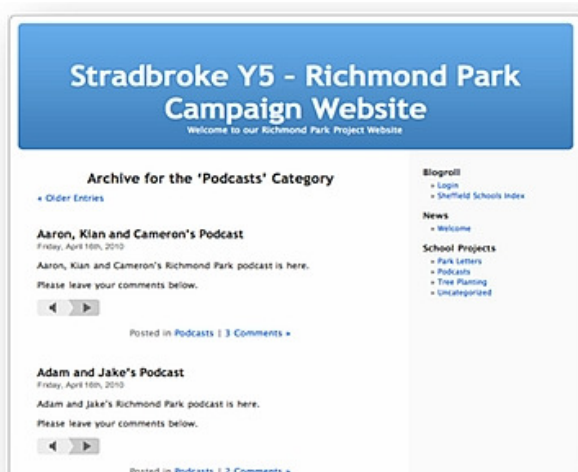
After this inspiring start to the project, the children began carrying out research using a range of sources, with a view to creating websites using Google Sites. As the school already used Gmail for email, access to Google Sites was straightforward, with individual accounts and passwords for security. Initially the websites were kept private, with the potential to share them through the school website at a later date.

The children planned the structure of the sites, considering the more effective ways to organise the information. They created a series of linked pages with a simple menu system. The information they had collected and checked during their research was then added to the sites for their classmates to review.

Levels of motivation were high as the children worked on their websites. They were very keen to continue the work, both in school and at home, adding information, editing and reorganising. Some children saw the potential for sharing learning and suggested that they could create teaching websites for other year groups, for example showing how to make a model Viking helmet. The children perceived writing to be an enjoyable activity at the computer, rather than a chore when on paper, and developed confidence in reorganising and redrafting using the new medium and genre of a website with a very real audience. This level of engagement was sustained throughout the project.

These tools are now being used more widely in the school, with the book club creating websites for younger children and the onsite Victorian classroom considering offering a Skype service similar to that at Jorvik.

3. Stradbroke Primary School



Ben Ramsden was working with his colleagues on a campaign to improve their local Richmond Park, which had fallen into disrepair, but was a much valued green space for the local community. The campaign provided many cross-curricular opportunities, but Ben's focus for the Sheffield Learning Journey was literacy and citizenship. He decided to build a public facing blog. This would allow children to:

- Attract a real audience to their campaign work;
- Use a variety of media to support their campaign, that could be published online (images, video, podcasts, letters etc);
- Realise genuine links between their own school-based activities and their local community;
- Build meaningful links with other Primary school children who may share their interests and concerns.

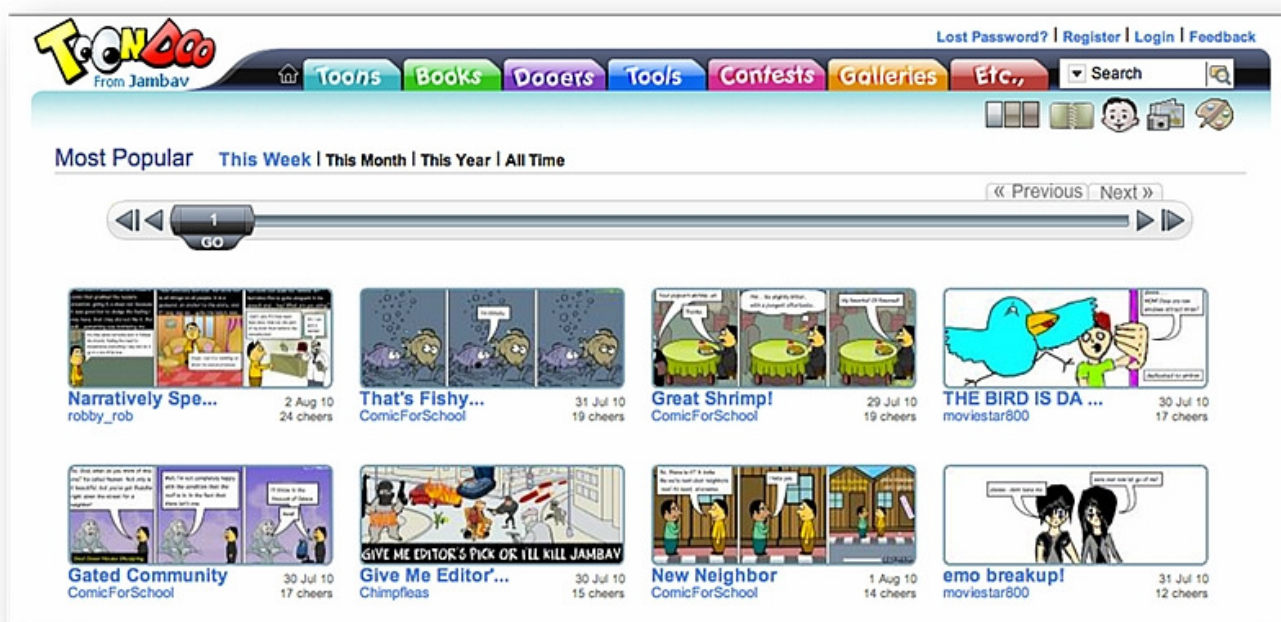
Ben investigated a few alternatives for building the blog, but eventually decided on the YHGFL blog, (built on Wordpress), as this seemed the easiest to use that he could access from within school. Embedding video was problematic and this caused some disappointment, however children were able to post up all their other resources. These included:

- Some excellent, passionate letters from the children to local town councillors and other community members
- Images of the children planting trees in Richmond Park
- Podcasts created by the children that explained their campaign and encouraged others to get involved.

All these resources were able to be reviewed and be commented on by anyone visiting their site and it was this eliciting of a real audience's support and interest in the campaign that really engaged the children. Unfortunately there was little response from the other schools involved in the Sheffield Learning Journey, despite numerous attempts both by EdICTs and Ben to garner responses. It became clear that the 'human factor' in a web 2.0 project like this was crucial to its success, and stronger working relationships and collaborations between schools will need to become established if projects like this are to maximise benefits in the future. It may be that higher level strategic initiatives managed by the LA and school leaders need to be set up to encourage communications and reviewing of work.

Despite this disappointing lack of comments from the wider community, there is no doubt that the project met with some success. The combination of a real campaign about real issues that children care about, with the ability to create a range of media and publish it online, engaged and motivated children. It also encouraged them to create carefully considered pieces of work that demonstrated a strong sense of purpose.

4. Valley Park Primary School



Mark Allison was keen to find strategies and tools to re-engage children in literacy, and in particular, writing stories. The emphasis for this project was to explore science fiction, and to provide opportunities for children to create their own stories in fun ways, using rich media where possible. Initial project aims were to:

- Explore the history of comic writing;
- Discover what makes a 'good' story' and consider how to create one;
- Recognise what is unique about comics - the mix of graphics, dialogue, narrative and drama;
- Improve engagement in literacy activities, especially creative writing;
- Explore peer to peer support options.

Mark initially tried using the online application Pixton, but soon discovered that the registration process for young children was onerous and time wasting. While there was clear focus on the need to safeguard children when using online applications, the need to register with a parent's email was problematic in that many children either didn't know the address or parents didn't have one. After a follow up conference with EdICTs, it became clear that ToonDoo was a viable alternative. It was easier to register, allowed users to ringfence their creations from public view, and most importantly, was an engaging, accessible cartoon creation tool, with plenty of tools and graphical content for children to work with.

Once children started to create their comics, Mark immediately noticed what a positive impact it was having on the creative and writing process. A number of immediate advantages were:

- Children of all abilities were able to access ToonDoo and create meaningful texts.
- Children of widely varying abilities were able to engage, produce and share literacy stories. In the past, using a pen and blank page approach created problems for children who find writing a challenge.
- Children no longer regarded writing as a chore but rather as a way to interact with their friends, peers and the wider community - the online application provides facilities for comments and feedback from other users or viewers.
- Children's attitude to literacy work changed, from reluctance to great enthusiasm.
- The small group situation lent itself to the sharing of ideas. The overriding mood during the sessions has been one of great enthusiasm and 'buzz'.

One of the main benefits was the enhanced interest in the work of their peers that children showed. The project has encouraged a greater sense of mutual support among children when evaluating or commenting on each other's work. They now help and encourage each other more. This general sharing of ideas and positive approach to each other's work has produced an excellent classroom environment.



Mark is convinced that children have become more confident with ICT as well. They now save and share work more assiduously and enjoy producing visually high quality content they can claim as their own. The comic strip genre was clearly very popular with the children. The class had had previous experience with a Doctor Who site, but it was the open-ended dimension of the Toondoo site that increased their motivation and engagement. A significant piece of evidence for this is that many class members continue to post comics they have created independently at home. This would seem a good example of how access to the right tools and environment through the internet, allows children to continue learning independently beyond school. The small group situation also lent itself to the sharing of ideas. The overriding mood during the sessions has been one of great enthusiasm and 'buzz'.

Mark states there has been an increase in literacy attainment since the beginning of the project. While other factors may have contributed to this, he considers that using the site has certainly provided the children with a creative outlet for their literacy, something which definitely had not been available to them during booster sessions on grammar and punctuation.

Impact on learners and learning

During the projects, teachers collected evidence about the impact use web 2.0 tools had on the children's learning. They then reflected on the tools chosen and how they were implemented, informing future developments and uses of ICT and web 2.0. This evidence showed that using web 2.0 tools impacted on three broad areas:

- Motivation
- Literacy
- Collaboration

Motivation

All the teachers reported an increase in children's motivation. This was demonstrated through greater engagement and raised levels of excitement and enthusiasm. The provision of a 'real' audience was often identified as a reason for this, whether that was classmates, children in other schools, families or the general public.

Most children received a boost in confidence during the project. This covered many areas including writing, speaking and listening and ICT skills. Many teachers identified the professional appearance of the work produced using web 2.0 tools. The level of independence with which the children were allowed to work may also have contributed, with children planning their own projects and voluntarily continuing learning outside the classroom and sharing their work with friends and family.

Literacy

Although the Learning Journey project was always intended to be cross-curricular in nature, all the projects involved writing in some form. Many had a Literacy focus, with other subjects providing a wider context.

Many of the teachers found that their expectations about ICT's positive impact on redrafting, character and setting development and structure of writing were confirmed. This was largely attributed to the affordances of the tools chosen, namely the ability to express ideas using a range of media, organise and reorganise them, publish them for feedback, improve and correct without leaving any evidence and republish until a final version was complete. This also seemed to contribute to the children's increased use of imagination and creative approaches to the content and structure of their writing.

The children's greater attention to vocabulary and punctuation surprised several teachers. Where children had recorded spoken ideas, this was put down to being able to listen repeatedly to drafts, hear that improvements could be made and punctuation inserted. Other tools, that provided a range of images and media for children to include in their writing, seemed to free the children to focus on the word and sentence level aspects of improving their writing.

Motivation to improve and redraft writing was increased at least in part due to the provision of a 'real' audience, in particular one that responded and provided feedback. Teachers commented on how keen children were to both give and receive comments, some of them dancing and singing in celebration! There seemed to be greater pride taken in the work because it was actually being published and could be shared with a wider audience through the internet. This was particularly noticeable in boys, with most teachers commenting on their increased engagement and enthusiasm for writing and putting this down to the use of ICT as a medium. Many commented on how writing on a computer was deemed to be easier and more fun than writing in a book, perhaps explaining the significant effect, noticed by many, on children with SEN and EAL.

Collaboration

Collaboration, both face-to-face and virtual, was a significant element of these projects, with children working in pairs and small groups, as well as receiving feedback from others online. Teachers commonly commented on the genuine nature of the collaborative learning that took place as a result, even when children were working with unusual and teacher-selected partners. Many children seemed to gain inspiration from feedback received from others and the ability to see other children's writing and discuss it with them. Some discussions took place during lessons, others asynchronously online and still others during after school meetings arranged voluntarily by the children.

Almost all the projects also involved some element of peer assessment and feedback, adopting techniques previously used on paper. The number and quality of the comments was generally perceived to be more and better when posted online. Several teachers noticed the children's willingness to learn from each other and solve problems together. This also seemed to lead to more learning from mistakes, rather than perceiving them to be failures.

Impact on teachers and teaching

The teachers reflected on the impact of using web 2.0 tools on themselves and their teaching. Aside from an overarching feeling of satisfaction and enjoyment on having embarked on a challenging project and completed it, the reflections fell into four areas:

- Use of ICT;
- Critical reflection and evaluation;
- Developing pedagogy;
- Working with colleagues.

Use of ICT

It is perhaps inevitable that, during a project of this nature, the teachers involved would feel that their ICT knowledge and skills developed significantly. Many did indeed comment on this aspect, explaining that much of this occurred, not through direct training, but through exploring web 2.0 tools, discussions with the EdICTs consultants and colleagues and learning alongside their pupils. This seemed to result in a deeper understanding of how:

- ICT can provide new and more varied opportunities for learning;
- To combine ICT with other learning tools and approaches;
- To combine a range of ICT-based tools and skills within a project;
- To organise and manage ICT resources to maximise access when needed.

During the project, many of the teachers overcame obstacles, including fear of using new ICT tools, lack of skills, worries about children's security online and issues around the filtering of websites. Finding solutions, and knowing who to ask for help, built confidence and led to many teachers expressing a new desire to keep up to date with what web 2.0 and wider ICT can offer learning across the curriculum. Several teachers became aware of the web 2.0 tools available through the VLE, already accessible to them, and wanted to investigate these further.

Critical reflection and evaluation

By adopting an action enquiry approach to this project, one of the objectives was to enable teachers to engage in critical reflection in order to consider the impact of the web 2.0 tool/s they had introduced. The action enquiry model involves:

- the identification of a question or issue;
- the application and trial of action to address the issue;
- reading about the results of research into the issue;
- evaluation of the impact of the action taken;
- the identification of any further enquiry needed.

Using this approach, the teachers developed a sustainable methodology for the evaluation and selection of ICT-based tools for learning in the future.

During the project, teachers were encouraged to evaluate web 2.0 and wider ICT tools, reflecting on their impact on learning and

teaching. Most teachers reported an initial nervousness about using the new tools in the classroom, followed by a developing confidence to try new ICT-based approaches. They collected evidence about the impact of using web 2.0 tools, in the form of photographs, audio recordings, children's work, video, field notes and interviews with children. This informed their evaluations and gave them the skills and knowledge to select the most appropriate tools to enhance learning and motivation. It highlighted that the focus should remain on learning and teaching when evaluating ICT, making ICT a more accessible area, even for those lacking skills and confidence at the start of the project.

Developing pedagogy

Most teachers found that the project strengthened and enhanced their pedagogy in a variety of ways. It is difficult to establish whether this is due to the web 2.0 tools used or their engagement with the action enquiry methodology or other factors outside the project. However, the evidence reported by the teachers seems to be directly linked to the affordances of the tools used.

Several of the projects involved recording children's ideas as audio files and sharing them online. Perhaps not surprisingly, teachers noted that these activities increased opportunities for speaking, listening and discussion. Interestingly, almost all the other teachers also reported an increase in the amount and quality of discussion about the work being produced. They also noticed children asking each other for help and offering each other solutions, reporting that children seemed more willing to take risks and learn from mistakes when working with web 2.0 tools. Encountering problems did not seem to be such a barrier to learning, but rather one of the points where learning occurred.

Discussions about what and how the children were learning (metacognition) also took place more frequently both between the teacher and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves. This was particularly noticeable where peer assessment and feedback were used explicitly, for example the use of blogging and comment tools. In some cases this was planned into the projects, but in others it happened more spontaneously. Several teachers felt that this was in part due to the provision of a real audience for children's ideas. They found this to be most helpful when the audience was active and communicated with the writers, providing motivation to improve and extend learning.

Most of the teachers found that the children who benefited most from using web 2.0 tools for writing and communication were the lower attainers, those with SEN and EAL. The tools, and the way that they were integrated into learning, provided the teachers with additional methods of motivating and engaging these children and enabling them to express their ideas in ways that looked equal to the work of their peers.

Impact on schools and communities

Teachers reflected on the impact the project had on whole school issues and the wider community. Impacts on the wider context included:

- Whole school issues;
- Working with colleagues
- Curriculum;
- Community.

Whole school issues

Pupils were encouraged to share their ideas and approaches with other children in the school through presentation of their learning in whole school assemblies. This began to spread the use of the web 2.0 tools more widely, with staff involved in the project sharing their expertise with others. Children also shared their skills and knowledge with staff and other pupils, explaining both how the web 2.0 tools worked and why they were useful. This reflects the recent development of child-led CPD that is seen to be effective in many areas.

For those teachers who were ICT subject leaders, confidence in ICT leadership increased through seeing the impact of ICT on wider learning and identifying the process that is needed to maximise this across the school. Subject leaders of other subjects also commented on how they could see the benefits of ICT to learning in their subject and would include it in future

Action Plans.

Working with colleagues

In all the projects, teachers worked with their colleagues in various ways:

- Collaboration with year group partners and teachers in partner schools;
- Seeking advice and support from ICT co-ordinators, enthusiasts and support staff;
- Sharing their new skills and findings with colleagues to extend learning opportunities more widely within the school;
- Seeking support from EdICTs consultants and LA staff.

They reported that, in learning from colleagues, there was a feeling of complementing each others' skills and an understanding of how they could support each other professionally. In most of the schools, learning from the strengths of others was seen as a positive and sustainable way of working in areas, such as ICT, where some teachers lack confidence.

Although the majority of the teachers involved were not subject leaders for ICT, many ran staff training or professional development

sessions and staff meetings, bringing a range of web 2.0 tools, and knowledge of their potential to extend learning, to their colleagues. In this respect they provided positive role models, both in their use of web 2.0 tools and their critically reflective approach to the selection, evaluation and integration of ICT into learning.

Curriculum

Because the focus of the project was learning, rather than ICT, the web 2.0 tools were well embedded into meaningful learning experiences in every case. This meant that the teachers observed the impact across the wider curriculum and other areas of learning. This included:

- The inclusion of web 2.0 tools in Action Plans for other subjects;
- The inclusion of web 2.0 tools and approaches in whole staff training days;
- Increased use of peer assessment and feedback using ICT;
- Development of thinking skills across the school;
- Development of e-safety and responsible use approach across the school;
- Use of web 2.0 tools in cross phase groups and beyond the standard curriculum e.g. book club.

Community

The schools involved in the project were members of several other communities:

- The local community of the school;
- The wider Sheffield LA community;
- The global online community.

Each of these communities was affected by or involved in the Learning Journey Project in some way.

Several schools plan to extend the use of web 2.0 tools to enable them to continue and extend cross-school and cross-phase writing projects. This included:

- involving other classes and year groups in peer assessment;
- working with classes and partner or other local schools to provide a real, new audience for children's work;
- involving parents in projects through shared access at home.

The projects that involved public feedback experienced varying levels of success, depending on a range of factors. Those that used online creation tools, such as Toondoo and Storybird, were able to tap into an existing community of users. This provided motivating encouragement from a 'real' audience, but ran the risk of the children encountering inappropriate language in some cases until teacher moderation was enabled. Projects using public blogs found it a challenge to engage with an audience and get feedback either from other schools or members of the local community involved in campaigning. This demonstrated the amount of organisation and structure that may be needed to kick-start a project and the need to build on established relationships to ensure that the children receive responses to the publication of their work. Although there are many successful class blogs in existence, they tend to run over longer periods of time and use other networks, both online and face to face, to develop a sense of community.

Use of web 2.0 tools in teachers' reflections

During the project we also used a range of web 2.0 tools to support, evaluate and capture ideas.

Many of the teachers were new to using these tools, but were enthusiastic and commented frequently on the value of:

- Feeling part of a community;
- Receiving instant feedback on their presentations;
- Being able to ask and answer questions as they arose;
- Having access to a wider audience and community through Twitter;
- Feeling that their presentations were valued because so many people were getting involved and paying attention to what they had to say.

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Appendices

List of Web 2.0 tools used

Google Maps <http://maps.google.co.uk>

Google Sites <http://sites.google.com>

Primary Pad <http://primarypad.com/>

Skype www.skype.com
Storybird <http://storybird.com/>
Studywiz Gallery <http://www.studywiz.com/>
Toondoo <http://www.toondoo.com/>
Twitter <http://twitter.com/>
Voicethread <http://voicethread.com>
Wallwisher <http://www.wallwisher.com/>
Wordpress <http://wordpress.org/>

Further reading

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Richardson, W (2009) Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms. London: SAGE Ltd.
Blogs and online information:
Oliver Quinlan's blog. Reflections on learning, teaching and technology from a young teacher in an inner city primary school. <http://www.oliverquinlan.co.uk/blog/>
Tom Barrett's blog. Inspirational ideas for using technology to enhance and extend learning. <http://edte.ch/blog/>
Alan November's website. 'Expanding the boundaries of learning' using technology and online tools. The Information Literacy section under Resources provides excellent materials to use with children and teachers to explore the validity of online information. <http://novemberlearning.com/>
ThinkUKnow Cyber Café. E-safety and responsible use materials for KS2 children. http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/8_10/cybercafe/cafe/base.aspx

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