

ETAGs Summary Submission

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Introduction

This short report is a summary of submissions by number of members of the MirandaNet Community. For a more substantial insight into the contributions made please visit the website <http://mirandanettags.wordpress.com>. This just gives a flavour of the emerging themes from knowledge and experience in our community.

Connected Institutions

Education in the connected world

Policy suggestion for the future: Government policy should be supporting a holistic picture of the uses of digital technologies in education institutions that include but are not restricted to these areas: assessment, business, collaboration, communication, CPD, curriculum, planning, procurement, Teaching & Learning, Technology Enhanced Learning. Policy must be set in the context of current legislation and best practice and designed to inspire teachers and learners to be engaged and empowered.

What caused you to suggest this policy? Learning institutions need support and guidance in areas such as ‘what’ for example, functional specifications, standards and procurement processes, ‘why’ for example enlightenment regarding what might be possible, and, ‘how’ for example, CPD or evidence from best practice research.

Sharing Research

Policy suggestion for the future: Government recognition for all the bodies who are trying to improve the navigation routes to UK research on digital technologies in learning and some funding to bring them together in their endeavours. Legislation to prevent a new government ceasing the maintenance of websites with resources on them funded by the tax payer.

What caused you to suggest this policy? The impact of closing of the websites linked to the quangos by the Coalition may not have been foreseen at the time - now that this is known a democratic government like the UK should be prepared to put laws in place to ensure that professional research is always accessible. There is a evidence of a keenness from the profession to rebuild such a knowledge repository: For example, MESH (www.meshguides.org) and Learning Designer Community (<http://buildingcommunityknowledge.wordpress.com>) which both have international reach.

Servers and Infrastructure

Cloud Service for All Education

Policy suggestion for the future: Creating a sustainable national infrastructure as a service, that is to develop a national, if not an international Cloud Service Hub for education. This would encompass a big data teaching and learning platform with analytic tools to work with “real” time big data for all stakeholders from industry to academia to researchers and students. The aim is to position the UK as a critical leader in delivering the interdisciplinary thought leadership at all levels of management and education to support the socio-economic change and shift in digital knowledge sphere.

What caused you to suggest this policy? Big data is the infrastructure and if we are to make use of the data to advance education it needs to be accessible and usable by both teachers and learners. The benefits of infrastructure as a service are that it eliminates the need for local servers and their management. Everything from keeping applications up to date to backups is eliminated and managed remotely. It makes information more universally accessible and requires minimal on-sight technical support saving salaries. In line with creating a research and development exercise to understand the process, we should develop a similar framework to JANET network and EDUROAM that supports a national effort for a UK Education Cloud service that is supported by government and industry but regulated by an independent body.

E-Safety at school and home

Policy suggestion for the future: With cloud services as infrastructure we need to develop social policies that provide the right type of guide lines for parents and schools access to the broader range of services now available using a community wide approach with guidelines. Schools are often well equipped but further support is required at home. Thus improved advice and guidance from a SINGLE website (DFE) where parents can access the information and guidance needed to help them setup access to the internet at home or on children’s devices in a pain free manner.

What caused you to suggest this policy? Recognised that schools are safe places to use the internet for children, but can the same be said for homes? The issue is that we cannot guarantee the same for home use? Tools available are complex and require technical support. What is needed is an education resource

for parents where they can to for advice and guidance as well as be shown various easy solutions to help them with Internet access at home. In particular dealing with different needs for different ages of child. This is a major issue for a lot of schools and has to be addressed as more and more children are online and the introduction of devices.

Understanding and Accrediting Learning

How to value knowledge and experience

Policy suggestion for the future: The policy implications are less about the creation of new or separate policies and more about ensuring greater emphasis on self and peer assessment within existing policies and making the relationships with existing policies more explicit. Essentially, we need to value and credit community knowledge and construction and the sharing and re-use of knowledge and foster collaborative feedback and peer assessment.

What caused you to suggest this policy? There is a growing trend for intensive traditional assessment and that this takes time away from the opportunity for deep creative and innovative collaborative learning to take place. Although technology can help in easing in certain traditional assessments, such as, multiple choice style questions we need to move towards creative learning through assessment and especially through peer assessment and feedback. Technology can assist in this transition. We need to attend collaboratively to the well-being and growth of the learner as a person in a community and build on the Children Act (DFES 2004) and Children Plan (DCSF 2007). There are five themes they espouse represent a range of factors and outcomes that should be attended to if learners are to take responsibility for themselves as lifelong learners. This should form part of the drivers for policy development in Education.

Wild cards

Continuous Professional Development

Policy suggestion for the future: Policy must be tuned to promote CPD frameworks based on teacher inquiry and teachers as learning designers or preferably – both . CPD offerings promoting a specific tool, technology or resource should be minimised, as these are transient and context-specific.

What caused you to suggest this policy? A review by the EPPI-Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London, found that continuous and collaborative professional development was linked with a positive impact upon teachers' repertoire of teaching and learning strategies, their ability to match these to their students' needs, their self-esteem and confidence, and their commitment to continuing learning and development. They also found evidence that such professional development was linked with a positive impact upon

student learning processes, motivation and outcomes. Studies by Laurillard, Kali, Voogt and McKenney and others have highlighted the value of training teachers as learning designers.

Summary

If we do nothing else but start the process of creating, supporting and participating in creation of a large scale data hub for Education based on the principals of data management services for advancing teaching and learning this will be a huge contribution to advancing the access and sharing of education resources. This critical paradigm shift will enable the UK to maintain and be Education leaders. However, this decision requires putting education, the learners and the teaching professionals centre stage. Building around such decisions, such as CPD, shared knowledge and practice through the large communities and networks that exist will be essential. Any systems set in place must work beyond a particular government. Education and its needs are long term and if nothing else is possible then resources built by society should be accessible by the society if they are to bring national and international benefit.

Such a change in policy setting will require privacy and citizen rights of access and protection of use to be set at the foundation. Companies and governments making inappropriate use of the data should be held to the highest accountability.

For specific recommendations:

1. Connected Institutes¹
2. Services and Infrastructure²
3. Understanding and Accrediting Learning³
4. Wild Cards⁴

¹ <http://mirandanettags.wordpress.com/connected-institutions/recommendations/>

² <http://mirandanettags.wordpress.com/servers-and-infrastructure/recommendations/>

³ <http://mirandanettags.wordpress.com/understanding-and-accrediting-learning/recommendations/>

⁴ <http://mirandanettags.wordpress.com/wild-cards/recommendations/>