



ESHA magazine

EUROPEAN SCHOOL HEADS ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2010

**Financial crisis: The impact
on education is large**

European Education Policy

**Social Network websites;
benefits and risks**



COLOPHON _

ESHA magazine is the official magazine of the European School Heads Association, the Association for school leaders in across Europe. ESHA Magazine will be published three times between now and the end of the school year and will be published 7 times in 2010-2011. You are welcome to use articles from the magazine but we would appreciate it if you contacted the editor first.

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About ESHA

ESHA is a Foundation that consists of 32 Associations of Heads and Educational employers in 25 European countries in primary, secondary and vocational education.

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17th European School Heads Association Conference
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Dear ESHA friends and members,

I was quite lucky getting back from the United States one day before the European airspace was closed because of the volcanic eruption in Iceland.

I was in Houston, Texas, at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), one of the largest organizations in the USA. The theme for the conference was “Mission possible”; Enrich your world and beyond!’ This year there was another huge decrease in the number of participants because of the continuing effect of the economic crisis on the funding of US education. Some schools in the USA lost half of their annual budget with some schools having been closed because of lack of money. You can read more of the impact of the financial crisis from our American friend Darrrell Rud in this edition of our ESHA magazine.

In Europe we’re facing similar risks for budgetary cuts, restrictions and impending financial shortfall. The impact of the Economic crisis in Europe will be felt later than in the USA where the economic crisis originally started. In the autumn we will send out a survey to find out what the anticipated effects are for the next school year across our ESHA membership associations. But there’s also some good news. We’ve spoken with the Board and CEO from NAESP and agreed on further collaboration between ESHA and NAESP to exchange articles from our magazines and to compare our Working Plan in order to see what we can do to learn together and to benefit from each others’ experiences of leading and managing schools in the present difficult financial climate.

I wish you all the best in preparing your schools for the next school year. ◀

A Personal View

by John Fairhurst

JOHN FAIRHURST, ASCL (UK), PRESIDENT ELECT 2010 – 2011

Firstly, I must stress that it is an honour to have been invited to write the first of these “*Presidential Views*” for the newly launched ESHA e-magazine. I shall formally take up the Presidency of ASCL (The Association of School and College Leaders) in the UK next academic year, and am much looking forward to playing a pro-active role in ESHA as part of my duties.

ASCL has always sought to make an international contribution – not least because the UK’s schools have been subjected to immense political pressure and drastic reform in the last twenty years. Mrs Thatcher began the process and she never did any thing “by halves”. Hers were deep-seated reforms that still largely define the way our schools work.

But Mr Blair was more than happy to push us, too – and was every bit as relentless. In 13 years, the Labour Government has enacted 13 major Education Acts. Just last year alone, Head teachers had 4000+ pages of instructions and “advice” from the Ministry in London! Unsurprisingly, Education is a major feature of our General Election campaign that is raging furiously as I write.

In the turmoil of such rapid development we, the UK's school leaders, have sought to discover how others address similar problems elsewhere. In fact, that is my overwhelming reason for wanting to be active in ESHA: there is so much that we can learn from each other.



Schools in England enjoy significant autonomy, rather more than in most (but not all) other EU states. Yet we also most cope with intense scrutiny and a flood of centrally-imposed regulation.

Undoubtedly, compared with 1975 when I started my teaching career, schools in the UK are vastly better run. Education is far more valued, funded and equipped. Most importantly, today's teachers are so very much more professional and a career in teaching is now attracting graduates of the highest calibre. (In my view, no school – or schooling system – can be better than the quality of the teachers it attracts.)

« Schools in England enjoy significant autonomy, rather more than in most (but not all) other EU states. Yet we also most cope with intense scrutiny and a flood of centrally-imposed regulation »



But we have made a lot of mistakes, too. For example, in the UK we seem quite incapable of organising work-related vocational paths for our school students that enjoy the status and respect that is so well established elsewhere in the EU. A destructive effect of our school inspection and accountability systems has been that our students are over-assessed and, as a consequence, under-taught as they are prepared and prepared again for tests on a narrow and traditionally academic National Curriculum. Particularly at Primary School, the results of those tests matter far more *to the school* than to the students themselves.

« Now as the stimulus money is disappearing, our administration is turning their most recent infusion of federal dollars into controversial reform initiatives »

In the Lisbon Treaty of 2000 our political leaders committed our education systems to learn from each other, share experiences and work towards common goals. Those targets and aspirations have been up-dated for the next decade, 2010 – 2020, and that commitment re-affirmed.

ESHA is so very well placed to promote an active EU-wide dialogue between school and college leaders and, rightly, wants and expects the UK to play a full and constructive part..

Given the economic crisis that is besetting us all, the slow but steady flow of economic muscle and political power to the East and the obvious importance of knowledge and skills in the fast changing world of the 21st Century, how could we do anything else but help each other solve the problems that we all share? ◀

Agenda 2010

April 30 – May 2

The NAHT Conference in Liverpool

May 10

EB meets in Utrecht – preparation for The Comenius Regio program

The grant is for the development of the ESHA magazine and of an electronic platform for leadership networking, the total amount could be € 650,000 for a period of three years.

June

Third edition of ESHA Magazine

Mid-June, ESHA will know whether the grant will be given.

October 13 – 15

Regional Conference Germany in Landau, Rhineland-Palatinate

November 3

Board meeting: Wednesday 3 November: 14.00 – 18.00 PM

GA meeting: Wednesday 3 November: 18.00 – 20.00 PM

November 4 – 6

12th ESHA's BI-annual in Limassol Cyprus

From November 4th until November 6th the 12th European School Heads Association will be held in Limassol Cyprus. Registration is now open. Go to www.eshaz010.com and register!

Effects of the Financial Crisis on American Education

BY DARRELL RUD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS OF MONTANA



The last time that I was asked to write an article for the European School Heads Association (ESHA) was a few months after the United States had been attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001. At the time, I was serving as President of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and

was travelling all over our nation and to a few countries visiting schools and witnessing first-hand the recovery of our nation and the world from the senseless attacks and tragedies in New York City, Washington, D.C., and in Pennsylvania. *Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning* chronicled how Americans were picking themselves up personally and collectively.

Nearly nine years later, our nation is again reeling this time from the lingering effects of a national and global financial crisis including a recession of epic proportions. I will use this article to share my impressions on the effects of this on our nation's schools.

My perspectives will come from two sources, my work as Executive Director of the School Administrators of Montana (SAM) and my work with school administrators in the other 49 states due to my being President-Elect of the Association of State Executives (ASE) who work directly with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

In a recent research study by AASA, it was noted that "while the institution of public schooling has demonstrated a capacity to successfully cope with many threats, the scope and number of challenges presented by recent developments are unprecedented and threaten to overwhelm even the resilient public school system."

It should be noted that Montana is one of two states with a current financial positive balance (the other being North Dakota). Both of our states have a current revenue advantage compared to the other 48 states mostly due to successful petroleum and coal industries.

When the U.S. Government first proposed investing \$100 billion into the public school system as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the move was met with excitement and a sense of relief by most people who work in our educational systems. However due to significant revenue downturns in the individual states, schools and districts were faced with the likelihood of cutting many high budget items such as personnel and programs. These estimated cuts are expected to total more than \$350 billion over the next two years. Compounding this was the fact that virtually every state legislature utilized their portion of the ARRA funds to actually reduce their investment in their respective states' schools leaving schools in ❖❖❖

a definite bind. 87% of recent AASA survey respondents indicated that all of this infusion of federal money did not result in a funding increase due to these “shell games”.

Many of our nation’s politicians, including the Obama administration, had envisioned utilizing this infusion of money to save jobs, create innovation, and to significantly improve (reform) many of our nation’s least successful schools. Instead, the funds tended to be used for survival during these very challenging times.

America’s schools are having a very difficult time continuing to deliver essential services and these cuts and budget difficulties also threaten the gains schools have made in student achievement and in narrowing the achievement gap. For many, this current school year included fewer academic instructors, support staff, and student services staff.

As most experts agree, a strong educational system is one of the main drivers of a healthy economy. With so many of our nation’s schools and districts in a financial crisis that appears to be getting even worse by the moment, a strong investment in our public school system is vital for any sustainable recovery to take effect.

« America’s schools are having a very difficult time continuing to deliver essential services »

The money from our federal government is appreciated but usually comes with many strings attached and tends to lack flexibility in how it can be spent. As the federal government insists on playing an even greater role in the setting of national standards, testing, and most everything else in our public school system, they still provide less than 10% of the overall funding that fuels our nation’s public schools. The individual state government and local taxpayers foot the remainder of the bill.



Now as the stimulus money is disappearing, our administration is turning their most recent infusion of federal dollars into controversial reform initiatives that commonly include competitive grants, significant expansion of charter schools, revamped principal and teacher evaluation systems and controversial proposals for school reform for turnaround schools that lack an educational research base (all of which would replace the Principal if the school is “failing”). They are clearly shifting away from long-time formula grant programs to competitive grant programs.

Much of the latest research on this topic describes the time after the stimulus money has disappeared as approaching a cliff. Schools utilized the ARRA funds to hang on to what they had to a large degree through the 2010-2011 year. When those funds are gone, what revenue sources will replace them or will schools continue to be required to make massive cuts in programs and personnel? ❖

In 2010-2011, expected additional cuts for American schools, according to the latest research are in the following areas:

- Classrooms will be more crowded;
- Considerations for reducing operations to a 4-day school week will increase;
- Elimination of summer school;
- Limited bus transportation routes;
- Extracurricular activities.

Occurring at the same time as the above described “perfect storm” is that we are approaching the end of the infamous *No Child Left Behind*, the cornerstone of the educational policy of the administration of President Bush! It is expected that later this year, Congress will take up the process of reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

« Now as the stimulus money is disappearing, our administration is turning their most recent infusion of federal dollars into controversial reform initiatives »

As we continue to get closer to the “cliff”, complex proposals including new governance laws, funding increases on a competitive grant process, the teacher pension plan crisis, ESEA Reauthorization, and common core standards are but a few of the proposed systemic changes that threaten our resiliency, local control and the cornerstone of our democracy... public education. ◀



NAPD symposia lead educational thinking

The shifting concerns of school leaders as Ireland moves from the ‘Tiger’ economy to deep recession

BY DEREK WEST, ARTS AND EDUCATION OFFICER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY-PRINCIPALS, IRELAND [NAPD]



Speakers at the 2008 Symposium [left to right]: Professor John Coolahan, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Mary Hanafin [Minister for Education & Science, 2004-08], Michael Finucane, Áine O'Neill [President, NAPD, 2007-08], Paul Rowe, Clive Byrne [Director, NAPD].

NAPD represents school leaders in secondary schools in Ireland and has been active as the ‘united voice’ of Principals and Deputies since 2000. As the Association’s reputation has grown, it has taken a proactive role in stimulating reflective dialogues on education.

In 2007, NAPD hosted the first annual symposium on *Vision and Values in Education*. While the economic phenomenon, known as ‘the Celtic Tiger’, was still in full flight, NAPD wanted to open a debate on education, through moral, economic and pedagogical considerations, and by involving participants from the social, political, religious and academic sectors of the country.

The keynote speaker in March 2007 was Dr. Garret FitzGerald, former Taoiseach [Prime Minister] of Ireland, a distinguished economist and political commentator. He looked to teachers and school Principals to fill the moral vacuum, which had arisen from the seismic changes to Ireland and its economy and from the effective collapse of the authority of the Catholic Church. “Unless firm ethical foundations can be laid in our schools for what I would describe as a new *Civic Republicanism*, the prospect of improving, or even maintaining, the quality of Irish society as we move further into the 21st century seems pretty grim. We could be in the process of forging an ethical waste-land – a society without human values, corroded by materialism, selfishness, and hedonism.” According to his definition, Civic Republicanism involves a pluralist state, marked by the public engagement of its citizens in the interest of the common good.



“We could be in the process of forging an ethical waste-land – a society without human values, corroded by materialism, selfishness, and hedonism.” – Garret FitzGerald

In the second [2008] Symposium, Diarmuid Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, and Paul Rowe, Chief Executive of *Educate Together* [a movement for the promotion of multi-denominational schooling] presented contrasting perspectives on the theme of pluralism and diversity.



Garret FitzGerald

Archbishop Martin saw a distinct place for the Catholic school, as a community of support for faith, capable of welcoming others, while maintaining its ethos. “Christianity should not be either exclusivist or elitist.” However, with the publication, in 2009, of a number of damning reports on clerical child abuse, the Catholic Church has come under increasing pressure to relinquish its control of schools.

“Modern Irish parents want an independent form of education.” – Paul Rowe



Diarmuid Martin

Paul Rowe maintained that “modern Irish parents” want an independent form of education. Demographic growth is creating new centres of population and diverse communities of Irish nationals and newcomers. *Educate Together* has become a significant provider of a multi-denominational schooling at primary level and has high hopes of extending its remit to second-level in the near future.



Paul Rowe

By the time of the third Symposium, March 2009, the recession had made rapid inroads in Ireland and speakers attempted to define the role of education in Ireland's recovery.

For Chris Horn, one of the country's most successful ICT entrepreneurs, the key challenge is how to bring the teaching profession to the stage of being comfortable with these technologies, as many students, with ready access to the Internet, Google, Wiki etc., no longer accept their teachers as the prime source of information and knowledge. However, educators have the continuous role of challenging students' understanding and encouraging them to be discriminating regarding the data.



Chris Horne

“The affluence of Ireland had left behind many poor and disadvantaged citizens.” – Fergus Finlay

Fergus Finlay, CEO of Barnardos [an agency with a commitment to the welfare of children at risk] highlighted both the elitism and the exclusion operating in the 'Tiger' economy. The affluence of Ireland had left behind many poor and disadvantaged citizens. He asserted that 'education, education, education' is the greatest vehicle for lifting oneself out of poverty.



Fergus Finlay

In his address, Don Thornhill, one of Ireland's most senior public servants, examined of the role of education in promoting economic competitiveness. He set out three tasks for government policy: promoting teacher quality; facilitating parental choice regarding schools, and encouraging both competition and collegiality between schools. ❖

“It will not be possible to retain and improve our education performance... if we continue to come bottom of the OECD tables on resourcing the system.” – John Coolahan

At the end of each symposium, Dr. John Coolahan [Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of Maynooth] summarised the proceedings. He highlighted critical inadequacies in roll-out of policies over the previous sixteen years, in spite of education a rich resource of reports, government Green Papers, and White Papers and an unprecedented raft of educational legislation. He identified ‘three great national assets’ – the quality of the educational policies and the sense of ownership towards them; the tradition and level of parental interest in the education of their children; the quality of the teaching force and school leadership.

‘It behoves us to safeguard these assets. It will not be possible to retain and improve our education performance in a comparative, international context if we continue to come bottom of the OECD tables on resourcing the system.’

By March 2010, Ireland was deeper into recession. John Coolahan gave a historical perspective on the current crisis: ‘As far as Irish education is concerned, the Spartan years were much more plentiful than the years of plenty, but in earlier recessions circumstances were different: we had the scourges of high inflation, high unemployment, high emigration, and a very undeveloped education system. However, some of the pillars of society were more secure, although family, school and community were not always benign or supportive. Schooling formed very much less of the life experience of adolescents, with less than 20% of the age cohort completing schooling up to Leaving Certificate.



Don Thornhill

The greedy behaviour of bankers, the irresponsible activities of developers, and the inadequacies of regulatory controls, have caused widespread loss and grief for many citizens. – John Coolahan

‘Now schooling has moved centre stage, with over 80% completing the Leaving Certificate. Contemporaneously, other social agencies have been weakening or cracking – the family as a social institution, the political system, the churches. The greedy behaviour of bankers, the irresponsible activities of developers, and the inadequacies of regulatory controls, have caused widespread loss and grief for many citizens. There has been a great buffeting of traditional institutions and social attitudes in Ireland.’



Richard Pring

In keeping with the *Vision and Values* theme, keynote speaker, Richard Pring, began on a note of high idealism, with an unwavering advocacy of an education that responds to the questions: ‘What is it that makes us human? How did we become so? How might we become more so?’ [Jerome Bruner]. His key concern was to challenge his audience to respond to the needs of the large minority of disillusioned young people who leave school labelled as educational failures. He posed a basic question, “What counts as an educated nineteen-year-old in this day and age?” and answered it by pointing to five characteristics:

- Knowledge and understanding of the physical, social and economic worlds in which one lives;
- Practical knowledge and capability;
- Moral seriousness;
- Sense of, and commitment to the wider community;
- A sense of personal fulfilment.



Fergus Finlay





Leanne Caulfield

One of the novel elements in this Symposium was the platform given to the President of the Irish Secondary Students Union (ISSU), Leanne Caulfield, who reminded the participants that while students were the main stakeholders, they had the minimum say on the nature of schooling. She argued that students had much to contribute to school policies and told the symposium that the ISSU was seeking associate membership for student representatives on school boards of management and participation in decision-making on educational issues. Students are keen to take more ownership of their own education, which they wish to be holistic, rather than distorted by a too great emphasis on examination performance.



Ann Looney

“If students were expected to do more of the work themselves, it would be to their greater benefit.” – Anne Looney



John Coolahan

The third speaker was Dr. Anne Looney, Chief Executive of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. [A statutory body that advises the Minister for Education] She raised key questions about our current practices in assessing students in our public high-stakes examinations: the traditional model of assessment is “creaking” and students now have the ability “to crack the code” of the exams. She emphasised that students were finding new ways to generate evidence of their

learning and that we should take note of this. She pointed out that in their earnestness many teachers were doing too much of the work for students, and that a better balance was necessary: if students were expected to do more of the work themselves, it would be to their greater benefit.

In his concluding observations, John Coolahan referred to recent projections of greatly increased pupil enrolment for the next twenty years and he re-iterated the evidence of the under-resourcing of Irish education. [The percentage of GDP devoted to education had declined from 6.2% in 1987 to 4.5%, 20 years later, in 2007, some of the worst educational resourcing of all OECD countries].

“Society needs to be very careful not to short-change the younger generation” – John Coolahan

‘We accept that we are in the middle of a national economic crisis with unsustainable national debt. However, society needs to be very careful not to short-change the younger generation in their preparation and formation to face a demanding socio-economic future.’

The symposia have been open-ended and they have provided more questions than dogmatic answers. But as Ireland has found itself slithering from crisis to crisis, educational thinking has been positive and constructive. The provocative questioning has laid good foundations for a rational and reflective approach to recovery, with education and school Principals leading the way. ◀

European Education Policy

BY IAN BAUCKHAM – HEAD TEACHER BENNETT MEMORIAL DIOCESAN SCHOOL

In the political wrangling over the influence – or interference – of the European Union in member states’ domestic policies, we don’t often hear education mentioned as a particular bone of contention. There tends to be an assumption that education is a matter left to member states, or in some countries, such as Germany, largely to regional governments within states. It certainly was not considered in the founding Treaty of Rome in 1957 as an area for cross-European activity or policy. Dig a little under the surface now though, and a different story begins to emerge.



Although the implementation of education policy is a matter left to member states of the EU, the emphasis and direction of that policy is very much shaped and influenced by treaty-level and heads of government agreements within the EU. At a March meeting of the European School Heads Association (ESHA), this was a hot topic for debate following a presentation by David Bohmert from the Netherlands House for Education and Research.

In March 2000 at the European Council summit in Lisbon Europe's then leaders, with Tony Blair very much in the driving seat, agreed five benchmarks which all member states would move towards with a target date of 2010. In doing so they had in mind issues such as the unstoppable economic rise of China and the Pacific Rim economies, and social ...

unrest in economically and socially deprived cities across Europe. The agreement of these educational objectives is considered a turning point in European social development. The five benchmarks were:

- Reduce numbers of early school leavers
- Increase upper secondary school completion
- Reduce low achievers in reading at age 15
- Increase the number of maths, science and technology graduates
- Increase lifelong participation in education

In addition there were priority areas outside the formal strategy itself, including improving language learning and increasing participation in early years education.

It's not hard to see how these obligations have influenced government priorities across Europe over the past decade. Although we would rarely hear a government minister talking about the European backdrop to domestic education policy, any government will want to be seen to be in the lead within Europe and would be wary of allowing their country to slip too far down the Euro-rankings in these key areas.

« Undaunted by limited success of its first strategic foray into education, the EU has now agreed a new set of objectives for the decade 2010 to 2020 »

So, 10 years on, how has Europe done? The only objective actually hit or exceeded convincingly has been the proportion of maths, science and technology graduates, which across Europe has risen in the decade by more than 30%. By contrast, the number of low achievers in reading has actually increased since 2000, and in the other three benchmark areas progress has been generally flat and still well short of targets.

So what next? Undaunted by limited success of its first strategic foray into education, the EU has now agreed a new set of objectives for the decade 2010 to 2020. It's worth looking at these in some detail, as they will certainly inform policy formation in each of the member states. So far there have been no sanctions for member states which failed to meet targets. Now, Brussels thinks that a sanctions regime may be necessary, and this is likely to take the form of exclusion from additional funding for initiatives for member states who cannot demonstrate convincing progress in the benchmark areas.

So what are the new benchmarks?

	Position in 2007	Target for 2020
Adult participation in lifelong learning	9.7%	At least 15%
Low achievers in basic skills in reading, maths and science	25%	Less than 15%
Tertiary level attainment in 30-34 year old age group	29.9%	At least 40%
Early leavers from education and training	14.8%	Less than 10%
Early childhood education (age 4 start)	90%	At least 95%

There should be no surprise if the next phase national education policies, from whichever political party, reflects these priorities quite closely.

Euro-policy on education does not stop at these five binding benchmarks. Having been slow to get off the ground until 2000, there is now a series of initiatives which will impact on all of us in due course. Some of these are heads of government agreements, some actually spring directly from binding treaty agreements. Google Lisbon Treaty, now ratified of course by all 27 member states, and go to Articles 165 and 166. The first is on the promotion of Europe-wide communication and cooperation on education at student level, including the





promotion of the learning of European languages. The second is about the promotion of a vocational training strategy in Europe, so supplement what member states are doing. These areas will continue to attract significant funding for projects and initiatives from Brussels.

Other priorities still have been identified and have been linked to forthcoming EU presidential periods in a thematic way to raise their profile. Spain, which holds the presidency in Spring 2010, gets social inclusion and 'key competencies', Belgium, in Autumn 2010 gets a project called 'schools for the 21st century' focussing on personalised learning, assessment and learning to learn, and in Spring 2011 Hungary is asked to focus on early childhood education, active citizenship and leadership for teachers.

Monitoring progress in this plethora of initiatives and towards the five central benchmarks is a daunting task across the whole EU and all its 27 member states. There is strong interest in the models used in England particularly, which has in the eyes of many in Brussels the most robust and developed systems for measuring national educational performance, which in many states is either absent or in embryonic form only. Other governments will be under pressure to ensure that they too are able accurately to evaluate and report progress in their own countries.

« Perhaps we are sometimes less aware of the background to the latest initiative and the targets our own government works to set the context of the wider EU »

Understanding why our own government does what it does is sometimes hard for those of us in schools who have to implement what seems like a barrage of 'good ideas' from their own government. Perhaps we are sometimes less aware of the background to the latest initiative and the targets our own government works to set the context of the wider EU. Will promised education reforms in some countries giving successful schools more autonomy mean that monitoring progress towards these targets will go down the priority list? Unlikely – more freedoms for schools is unlikely to mean government taking its eye off incremental progress towards European goals, and the pressure will still be on for schools not playing their part. Perhaps it helps to have someone else to blame, especially if it's Brussels, next time a letter from the ministry falls into your in-tray! ◀

Social Network websites; benefits and risks

BY SARA GADZIK FROM ASCL.UK

Standfirst: Social networking and Web 2.0 tools have huge potential to benefit learners but schools need to carefully manage this new way of working, says Paul Haigh. He looks at some sensible precautions to safeguard staff and students.

Social network websites are a huge part of the lives of most young people and many adults, and they can be great fun and really useful. They can also present schools with problems.

Most schools have blocked social networking websites and mobile phones are at least frowned upon, so social networking is something young people mostly do in their free time.

Paul Haigh is Assistant Head for Specialisms and Innovation at Notre Dame High School in Sheffield. This article is an extract from his book *Social Network Websites: Their Benefits and Risks* – a guide for school leaders which is available from www.optimus-education.com Follow Paul on Twitter at www.twitter.com/paulhaigh

However, we know that ICT is a huge power for good and we have long seen its potential in terms of learning. I believe new technologies have the biggest potential, out of any of the tools we have, to personalise learning. Many people sum this up as giving students access to ‘any-time, anywhere’ learning, but while this is important it over-simplifies the potential.

Early examples of e-learning were too passive to have a big impact; digital folders of worksheets and PowerPoint presentations might have reinforced learning for the diligent student but, for e-learning to have real potential, tasks need to be interactive, engaging and personalised to the individual’s needs.

Web 2.0 – which is shorthand for social networking tools and the way people use the internet to share and create content – can enable this.

There are great benefits in using social networking technologies in learning – peer assessment, instant feedback, time management to name a few – but there are some important things to consider before launching this in your school.



Nowhere to hide

The biggest issue is authentication. To make sure students and staff don't hide behind aliases (which can enable mocking, bullying, ridicule and plagiarism) real names must be attached to everything they contribute. This is done by hosting all chosen Web 2.0 tools within the school's learning platform thereby linking them to the network user name and password.

Some children, especially younger ones, do not keep their passwords secret – either writing them down or sharing them with friends – and they need to be trained out of this from the first day they are issued with one. That way if someone writes on a forum, sends an email, enters a chat room or makes a blog post, their real name is attached.



Students can be encouraged to keep their passwords secret by telling them they are responsible for anything done in their name on the network and informing them of the sanctions to be applied in the case of misbehaviour or misuse, including failure to keep their password secure. Schools should make it straightforward for students to request a new password if they think their old one has been compromised.

All other social network and Web 2.0 sites should then be blocked to prevent people in the school moving their communities to unmoderated tools; the policy being if staff or students needs to use such technology it is available on the school system.

« To make sure students and staff don't hide behind aliases (which can enable mocking, bullying, ridicule and plagiarism) real names must be attached to everything they contribute »

The second consideration is archiving. All the user generated content, not just major documents and files but every line of chat and posting on a blog or forum, needs to be archived – even if the user thinks, and sees from their point of view, that they have deleted it.

This is a huge amount of data, so it is essential to make it searchable in case an incident needs investigating. The school must have full access to everything said. Digital storage is cheap so everything can be saved long after students leave school; some schools have been sued over abuse and bullying allegations many years after the incidents took place.



Student privilege

An Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) should make clear that the students are guests on the school's network and the school retains the right to access their files, keep copies and make them available to outside agencies, such as the police, should this be necessary. This might mean supplying emails they have written or read on the school system, or websites they have visited and files they have created, to be examined as part of an investigation.

Students' personal data on the school's management information system, including names, addresses, medical and academic information, needs to be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 but the hosting of a student's work and emails on the school system should be seen as a privilege to enhance their learning and remains in the domain of the school.

Security can be set up so that students click to agree to abide by the AUP each time they log on to the school system – whether they are in school, at home or elsewhere. Breach of the AUP should result in sanctions that would include the removal of the privilege of access to the ICT system.

Where the school is using web-based services provided by a managed ICT service the school needs to be clear about how long data is to be kept (for example at the end of a managed ICT service contract), how easily the school can access it, who owns the data and what will happen to the data at the end of the contract.

While managed ICT services can remove a huge burden for schools they should be specified with e-safety in mind and ensure the school is able to manage student behaviour and investigate incidents quickly without having to resort to phone calls to off-site IT support desks.

Professional distance

Anecdotal evidence suggests staff who use social networking in their personal lives, including younger staff who have grown up as ‘digital natives’, can risk getting themselves into trouble when their role as a teacher and the power of social networking collide.

A teacher who enjoys ‘banter’ with students online increases the risk of becoming a victim – it is about maintaining a professional distance. My advice is that staff not be permitted to add current students to their online social networks, other than systems set up by the school for teaching and learning with built-in user authentication and archiving.

« A teacher who enjoys ‘banter’ with students online increases the risk of becoming a victim – it is about maintaining a professional distance. »

Neither should school staff accept invitations from students to join a student’s social network. Students who make such invitations should be spoken to by pastoral staff about the inappropriateness. Staff should also be wary of adding students who have recently left the school as they may provide an indirect link to current students.

Finally don’t underestimate the importance of staff CPD, especially for those who aren’t digital natives. Hopefully the tools are intuitive and mimic what teachers and students use in their personal lives but the skills of the e-teacher are new. Facilitating online learning is very different to didactic ‘chalk and talk’.



Equally, induction for NQTs and other new staff need to be carefully planned to include the risks and benefits of new technology and how to maintain professional standards when communicating with young people online. Young staff who come from the local community might need the most guidance.

All staff members need guidance through acceptable use policies explaining how they should conduct themselves when collaborating with students online.

Previous big developments of ICT in school – such as the interactive whiteboard – only added new dimensions to the traditional role of the teacher. Old ideas about contact hours and the working day restrict how much of a teacher's time can be dedicated to online facilitation but that doesn't mean large portions of the job can't change.

For example, hours spent marking can be replaced by automatic, self- or peer assessment, freeing up time for teachers to generate content and interact with users online. Flexible working will impact on the traditional idea of both teachers and students 'coming to school'.

School leaders who personally engage with the technology understand the landscape, enjoy the personal and professional benefits, and lead by example in terms of revolutionising learning and how teachers collaborate with one another.

School leaders can make use of the ICT Register (www.ict-register.net) and thinkuknow (www.thinkuknow.co.uk) to develop good practice and access support from other schools.

The overall message to schools is to take care when using Web 2.0 tools but also to enjoy the vast benefits the technology offers. ◀

Mobile phones motivate

CONTRIBUTION FROM JENS PORSGAARD NIELSEN, DENMARK

Using digital media in teaching appeals to young vocational students, as the project's many examples demonstrate. This can be interpreted as a success in matching the majority of the students' preferred learning styles, in incorporating youth culture in a relevant way, and in facilitating teaching, so that learning in flow becomes possible.

- Students participate in and contribute to their own learning. Students are active and act from their own strengths and competencies.
- The learning process is changing, so that students participate in the choice of method and approach and become more equal with the teacher. This obviously requires that the teacher agrees to waive some of his power and control.
- The students' benefits from the teaching, in theory as well as practice, increase, as they are motivated by their desire to learn and their involvement.
- The community is strengthened (primarily in school education), where students are involved and engaged in learning, and support each other.





- The students' confidence and self esteem is strengthened, as the focus is on their strengths and competencies rather than on deficits and functional limitations.

The question so far is not only how schools can incorporate mobile phones into teaching, but: what is mobile technology and how can it be used, in a way that can directly influence (special) pedagogy, guidance and competency goals?

This is all an ongoing process for the teacher / advisor and for the school, because at this point in time, the motivational media are smart phones. Only time will tell what types of technologies or work methods will motivate children and young people with learning difficulties in the future. ◀

Thanks to member of the project's quality panel, Charlotte Koelle Joergensen, education leader, Social and Health School Greve, Denmark.
© Metropolitan University College, Denmark, Regina Lamscheck Nielsen, vocational consultant, and Karin Jakobsen, assistant professor. January 2010

News in brief

Changing the Constitution

During the last GB meeting, 12/13 March in Amsterdam, after voting, the text for the new constitution is accepted unanimously by the General Board.

In the Working plan 2010/2011

The four mayor issues to work on were accepted by the GB members: ESHA MAG, ESHA NET, ESHA CONNECT and ESHA WEB.

Spring GA 2011 – Paris

Jean Luc Garcia reports: The Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP) is willing to sponsor ESHA for the next GB meeting in April 2011 in Paris. This GB meeting is part of a Comenius program EUROMOVE in which each of us is involved. Details and dates will follow as soon as possible.

