

## **Distributed Control of Teaching and Learning**

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You may have noticed in examining the evolution of the pathfinder schools they have all increasingly distributed the control of the teaching and learning. They have actively sought to recognise, harness and enhance the contribution of all the teachers of the young – the parents, carers, grandparents, the children themselves, interested community members and professional ‘teachers’ in other agencies – in the 24/7/365 teaching of the children.

The development stands in marked contrast to the traditional paper based school where, as the evolutionary stage attributes reveal, the school has unilateral control of the teaching and learning, firmly believes it and only it should shape the children’s schooling. As a consequence there is relatively little or no genuine collaboration between the school and the home, and the parents and children themselves are left by default to educate the children outside the school walls.

The situation begins to change, and change rapidly when schools move to a digital operational base, when all the staff, lead by an astute principal begin to appreciate the educational opportunities opened by the digital technology. One thus sees from the Early Networked stage schools, seemingly overnight beginning to genuinely collaborate with their parents.

The pronounced digital divide between the school and its homes blurs and the teachers begin to appreciate the many potential benefits of recognising and building upon the out of school learning. Why the pronounced change in thinking we are not sure. The theory would suggest the collaboration should be possible without the technology but all our case studies reveal it happening successfully only when the school adopts the digital operational base.

Follow the evolutionary continuum and by the Networked Evolutionary Stage – where the term ‘networked’ pertains to the level of social networking evidenced throughout the school community, in and outside the school walls – the schools, regardless of situation or nation, are working collaboratively with the parents and school community in all manner of teaching and learning (Lee and Ward, 2013). The schools are distributing the control of the teaching and learning and they are ceding some of their power or more aptly using the power of their educational expertise.

In all case studies it was the school, and in particular the school principal that led the way in pursuing a more collaborative, socially networked and inclusive mode of teaching. Significantly that leadership was achieved through the application of educational expertise, and not consciously by position.

Inherent in that quest was the recognition of the vast, and largely untapped and underdeveloped teaching and learning potential outside the school walls, an understanding that the parents will always be the children’s first teachers, and a willingness to trust the parents and children to play a greater role in the schooling of a digital and networked world.

That trust, that willingness to distribute the control of the 24/7/365 teaching and learning was tested in the pathfinders in the move to allow the children bring to class their choice of kit.

BYOT, as defined by Mal and Martin Levins (2012), is an approach where the school understands the educational importance of trusting and respecting the wishes of the children and parents in the choice of the desired suite of digital technologies and of genuinely collaborating with the homes in marrying its teaching efforts with those of the school.

Indeed we would go so far as to say – based admittedly on an as yet relatively small sample of schools globally – that schools will likely be unable to move to the Digital Normalisation evolutionary stage and beyond until they are willing to distribute the control of the teaching and learning and empower all within the school's community.

Lee, M and Levins, M (2012) *Bring Your Own Technology* Melbourne ACER Press

Lee, M and Ward, L (2013) *Collaboration in learning: transcending the classroom walls* Melbourne ACER Press