BYOT

Moving from Lower to Higher Order Teaching

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March 2013

My current research into **Digital Normalisation and School Transformation** (hyperlink) has provided me an insight into a significant benefit of BYOT that we had not previously envisaged – the pronounced move away from teaching the lower level mechanics of the technology to applying the student's understanding of their kit in higher order teaching and learning, and in so doing positioning of the school and its teachers to take the learning to ever-greater heights.

While still early days – and while further research is required – the signs are that the pathfinder schools that have successfully normalised the 100% use of BYOT – and once again I stress I'm talking BYOT, not BYOD – are entering a watershed stage in the history of the use of instructional technology in schools where the schools will basically cease or markedly constrain teaching the children who bring their own technology to class how to use it – except for highly specific purposes - and will instead recognise the digital competence of the young and focus on the astute application of that competence in higher order learning tasks.

The potential implications for teaching are immense.

Bear in mind I'm talking about those senior primary/elementary school children upwards the school has chosen to have BYOT.

In brief the school will recognise the learning the young have been undertaking from a very early age, well before they enter school, in how best to use their personal technology and the associated apps, will accord the young prime responsibility for keeping abreast of the developments being made with their kit and focus on using that know how in higher order learning.

The history of the use of digital technology in schools over the last 30 plus years has been characterised by the school teaching children how to use the ever-evolving technology and applying the taught functions in the learning (Lee and Winzenried, 2009).

Most of that teaching has been lower order and mechanical in nature.

Until recent years – and still in the vast majority of schools today – that teaching has been based on the one, school selected operating system and invariably, a common suite of software applications.

While that has been happening in the schools the young of the world have as we know of their own volition embraced the use of the digital, used it as a normal part of their lives and universally evolved a suite of operational mores and a style of learning invariably at odds with the largely linear approach employed in schools.

Vitally in the last four/five years, particularly since the advent of the iPad, IOS and Android, the young have normalised the everyday use of the operating system/s and the associated apps of their choice. Their focus is on the desired functionality and not so much the operating system.

In examining the work of that – as yet very small - cadre of elementary/primary schools that have succeeded in normalising the use of BYOT across total year groups one notes that in allowing the children to use the technology of their choice the teachers are

- obliged to incorporate the use of different operating systems, Android and Windows– and different versions thereof, IOS and Amazon Fire, as well as different e-book readers

- deciding that in addition to the children being responsible for the choice, acquisition, care and maintenance of their own ever-evolving kit they should also be responsible for understanding its workings. If a child needs help they're expected to turn, as the research reveals they will do so anyway, to a peer or the networked world for help. It is not quite black and white as that but you can see the shift.

- focusing on the functionality of each child's kit, and recognizing that all the main operating systems have a range of apps – and that the children will chose those with the desired functionality. In collaborative teaching environments daily teachers, other students and various online sources will make suggestions about apposite apps but the key is that the child that makes the final choice.

- Concentrating on the learning task, not having to spend scarce, valuable time learning about and teaching lower level technological mechanics – and as such are able to focus on higher order learning.

For the first time in the history of the use of instructional technology in schools the schools are recognizing the digital skill set of the young acquired primarily outside the school walls, are not planning to teach the basic competencies but rather are looking to capitalize upon the children's capability and use it as a natural part of the teaching and learning process.

In speaking to the teachers involved they admitted to their initial fears but also stressed they would now not want it any other way.

As indicated these are very early days but already those involved talk of upper primary/elementary children becoming young scholars ideally positioned to undertake the requisite deep thinking and develop the desired intra and interpersonal skills (Pellegrino and Hilton, 2012).

It must be stressed one is talking schools that have well and truly normalised the whole school use of the digital, with astute principals which have put in the hard yards for 15-20 years and in the process have developed a learning ecology able to accommodate the aforementioned shift.

This is most assuredly not a move for later adopters who have not created that ecology.

Indeed the mere idea will likely freak many teachers.