

BYOT and the Home

Parent Perspective

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*In June I posted a piece on *The Home, Parents and BYOT*, strongly suggesting schools and education authorities give greater thought to the parent's desires in relation to BYOT.*

I've done a variant of that article, writing it from a parent's perspective, exhorting parents to more strongly express their desires.

Conscious the vast majority of educators are also parents I'd suggest you read this new post as a parent, reflecting on your home situation and what you should be able to expect technology use wise from kid's school/s.

Feel free to pass the post on to interested parents.

It is appreciated some of the 'home truths' expressed might offend some but many would argue it is more important for school leaders to recognise how far most schools lag in the actual use of the digital.

The vast majority of family homes across the Western world are already fulfilling their part in their school's moves to have the students bring their own technology (BYOT) into the teaching and learning process.

Unwittingly the student's homes have already normalised the use of the digital and the parents are guiding the astute use of the technology in their children's teaching and learning, 24/7/365 – to the extent that the usage is near invisible.

The contrast with the schools themselves is pronounced for it is only now that the schools are embarking on the quest to achieve the natural, everyday use already evident in the homes.

It is the schools that have yet to play their part.

On reflection it is the student's homes that are meeting society's current expectations about the use of the digital with most schools lagging well behind.

Disturbingly far too many teachers, educational bureaucrats and certifying bodies appear happily esconced in their paper based world, controlling the formal schooling seemingly unaware how far they are out of touch.

It is appreciated the part played by the homes could be significantly enhanced, but that can only happen when the teachers and the school leadership;

- recognise the contribution the homes are making

- appreciate the vast and largely untapped potential in the homes
- are willing to genuinely collaborate with the homes in pooling the teaching and digital capacity of both the school and the homes
- exercise their professional leadership and take prime responsibility for providing a mode of teaching that does meet society's ever rising expectations.

Ironically – but surprisingly – most of the current global moves by schools to use the student's technology has thus far paid scant attention to the readiness of the homes or the desires of the parents or the students – the school's clients – but rather have focussed on the challenges facing the teachers within the school walls.

Not surprisingly because schools for decades have operated as insular organizations behind their walls, focussing in on themselves, seeing no need to genuinely collaborate with the other teachers of the children or to have anything to do with the teaching and learning occurring outside the school walls.

The divide between the teaching and learning of the home with that of the school has become pronounced, with the parents and the children basically left by default to provide the teaching in the 80% plus waking time each year when the children aren't at school. Most schools and authorities don't recognise or have largely dismissed as play the very considerable learning the young of the world have acquired, particularly since the mid 90's in their use of the digital.

The irony is that for schools to achieve the desired total normalised use of the student's technology – or more aptly the home's property – they have to collaborate closely with the student's homes.

The schools need your support and your resources.

You are in a position of strength. – For more

As the Project Tomorrow survey (2011) revealed most of today's parents are digitally empowered and while most want to collaborate closely with their schools they want just that – to genuinely collaborate and to have their voice heard.

The strong suggestion is that you use your school's moves to BYOT to ensure voice of the parents is heard, their contribution to their children's teaching and learning from birth is recognised, the importance of the home in the BYOT equation is appreciated and that the parents – and indeed the young themselves – are supported in a more collaborative 24/7/365 mode of teaching.

To achieve this parents – and carers – need to be more conscious of what they have already achieved in their homes normalised use of the digital and how that base can be built upon.

The early moves by some schools and education authorities to impose a model of BYOT where the authorities tell the parents what technology the home has to buy and how it will be used should be vigorously resisted.

In adopting that approach the school or education authority is communicating how far it is out of touch with the current situation in its homes and how far behind is its approach to teaching in a networked society.

Highlight what is happening in the school's homes, underscore your normalisation of the digital, express the desire to collaborate with the school but it is time parents communicated their expectations more forcibly and affirmed that if schools want to make astute use of the home's resources 'one-way' collaboration has no place (Grant, 2010).

In furthering your appreciation of the current home situation ask yourself, and indeed other parents, the following questions.

- **Which digital technologies do you have and use everyday?**

Include everything you have.

You'll likely be surprised how extensive is the range in the home and how current is that technology.

In 2010 Bernard Ryall and I compared the level and nature of digital technology in the homes of 30 average Australian Y6 students with that in their classroom. We found that in the homes was conservatively 15 times greater than that in the classroom. Not a factor of two or three but fifteen (Lee and Ryall, 2010).

Since then the difference has continued to grow.

Through a combination of forces, not least of which is ever-lower prices virtually all family homes in the Western world with school age children like yours will invariably have

- more than one digital TV, and at least one PVR
- a DVD player
- multiple digital still and video cameras
- multiple digital sound systems/MP3 players
- use of some type of computer games player or console, most with 'Net connectivity
- some type of Internet access, usually broadband.
- multiple desktop or laptop computers, with many members of the family having their own
- Web enabled tablets
- multiple cell phones with half at least being Web enabled smartphones

In brief you'll have a highly connected home with an ever-evolving suite of integrated digital technologies, well positioned to move quickly to the latest technology when desired.

Your home can respond to 'game changing' personal technology developments at a speed impossible in schools with their limited budgets, budget committees and strict and often cumbersome buying procedures.

Yes – there will be a small percentage of families without and who need to be supported by your school, but even within lower SES school communities the percentage of children with out 'Net access is very low and the figure is continuing to drop.

Note not so much your current holdings but the major trends.

In 2010 (Lee and Finger, 2010) the author cited the latest data to underscore the immensity of the digital holdings of the student's homes.

Two years on those figures pale in comparison with today's.

Go to any of the major technology data sources like Pew Internet (2012), Project Tomorrow (2012), Gartner (2012) or Futuresource Consulting (in confidence market data) and you'll see, even with the GFC an ever upward home technology acquisition trend.

Reflect on the changing technology scene in your own family, and what you had three/four years ago.

Recognise that every piece of digital technology – even the latest iPad or Android device – has a finite common life cycle (Lee and Winzenried, 2009) (Gartner, 2012) and that for most digital technologies that life cycle is getting ever shorter.

Understand your children will never again work with such limited technology.

Ask yourself

- **Who chose their current technology and who is primarily responsible for its everyday use, care and upgrade?**

A related question is:

- **What is the nature of your children's use of that technology, in the home and on the move?**

From experience in discussing these questions with parents one will invariably find, as did the research of Green and Hannon (2007), that the children have a significant say in the choice of much of the kit, and are accorded significant responsibility by the parents to care for and maintain the gear.

The contrast with the school situation is likely to be pronounced, where the students invariably have no say in the choice of the instructional technology provided, how it is deployed and are never trusted to use the kit without supervision.

The data reveals that since the mid 1990's the vast majority of parents have consistently affirmed the importance they attach to their children having the appropriate technology and 'Net access in their home to further their education and life chances (Lee and Winzenried, 2009).

Ask yourself

- **Who taught your children how to use the technology to best effect?**

First off you are likely to say, as does the research (Tapscott, 1998) (Meredyth, 1999) (Green and Hannon, 2007) that the young invariably teach themselves – or they learn in conjunction with their peers.. The young rarely call on their teachers.

However as one reflects on who developed the children's process, thinking and social skills – attributes like critical thinking, reflection, cooperation, collaboration, patience and reinforced the importance of balance in the children's learning – you'll appreciate it is the parents who play the vital teaching role in the astute use of the technology.

Significantly you'll also find most parents seek to ensure the children's use of the digital fits with the children's cognitive readiness and that the very young's use is supervised.

The signs suggest Australia's very high international standing on student digital literacy reported by Sue Thompson (2012) from ACER can be primarily attributed to the normalisation of the digital in Australia's homes.

- **How important is trust in your children to the astute use of the technology?**

You'll invariably say it is fundamental, growing as the children develop and take ever-greater responsibility for their own learning and lives.

You'll find that trust underpins the children's use of the home and mobile technology. Abuse of that trust will have consequences but is that trust that allows the young, particularly from the upper primary years onwards to have largely unfettered use of the digital outside the classroom. (Lee, 2012).

Then ask yourself this key question

- **What support and recognition has the children's school/s provided the young's teaching and learning with the digital outside the school walls?**

The likely resounding reply will be none.

The research affirms not only don't the vast majority of schools support the parent's efforts, they don't collaborate with their homes, don't recognise the teaching and learning that has been occurring with the young since the mid 1990's and seemingly construct ever-greater stronger cyber walls to limit the school's interaction with the parents and the real world.

While there are pathfinding schools that Lee and Levins identified in writing **Bring Your Own Technology** (2012) and Lee and Ward have noted in their

research on Collaboration in learning: Transcending the classroom walls (in press) that have begun working with their homes they are still very much in a minority.

In brief there is with most schools in the Western world a pronounced divide between the teaching and learning in and outside the school, with most schools playing no part in the home's astute normalisation of the digital.

Centrality of Home – School Collaboration to BYOT

That has to change dramatically if your school is to achieve 100% student use of their own technology and to realise the vast dividends possible.

The successful implementation of BYOT requires a close, genuine and sustained collaboration between the school and its homes, and indeed the adoption of a more collaborative mode of teaching that entails all the teachers of the young working together.

The challenge lies within the school walls.

Uncharted Territory

It bears reiterating that these are still early days in the move to BYOT, that as yet no schools have achieved 100% normalised use of the student's kit and as such there are no full route plans to show the way.

It will entail the school and the home working together, learning hand in hand and remaining flexible.

There will be inevitable tensions and possibly some occasional warmth as long established ways of working are changed and schools and education authorities cede some of their power for the common good.

One of the greatest challenges for school and education authorities will be to work from a position of trust rather than the current position of distrust.

Trust

The use of instructional of instructional technology over the last century has been based on distrust, distrust of the students, the parents and even the teachers (Lee and Winzenried, 2009). Teachers had to acquire their various technology licenses before they were allowed to use them, to lock everything down after use and most assuredly never to let the students use any technology unsupervised.

It is already apparent in the early research (Lee and Levins, 2012) that the successful normalised use of the student's technology in the school, like that in the home has to be based on trust.

It is a vast change that won't be achieved overnight but which will need to be worked upon.

Conclusion

Probably in the annals of history never has formal teaching been so far behind the norms of the average home and so out of step with society's expectations in its slowness to normalise the use of the digital in its teaching.

Recognise what you've already achieved in your home and in collaborating with the school to normalise the 24/7/365 use of the technology unashamedly pressure it to meet and indeed exceed society's expectations.

The bottom line is that schools have been charged by society to provide the educational leadership.

They need to lead, not as in most situations lag so far behind.

As your school begins its quest to introduce BYOT make it clear what the home has already achieved and that the parents expect to be closely involved in its introduction.

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