BYOT

Readiness Pre-conditions

Mal Lee, Martin Levins, Chris Hubbard and Terry Freedman

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Readying your school for BYOT is crucial for the sustained success in this area.

Yet the current literature makes no mention of readiness or of developing an approach apposite for your context, seemingly forgetting that every school and its community is unique.

The assumption is that any school or education authority can introduce a model of BYOT whenever they decide, with no or minimal preparation.

They can, but there's a considerable likelihood of failure or very limited success that goes nowhere near realising the kind of potential available.

The plan ought be to ready your particular school's base for a smooth and successful implementation, a sustained development and a speedy movement to a phase where the model is normalised and becomes near invisible.

Key pre-conditions

i. Normalised use of the digital

If your school is to achieve 100% student uptake of BYOT and in turn normalise the use of the student's technology all the key members of the school's community, its students, parents and teachers have to have and be naturally using the technology.

In particular every teacher has to have normalised the use of the digital in his/her everyday teaching. The research (Lee and Finger, 2010, 2012) indicates it is not enough for the teachers to normalise the use outside the classroom, it has to be in the teaching.

a. Teachers

It is hard to stress how vital is the total teacher usage for the bottom line is that if a teacher doesn't use the digital as a normal facet of their everyday teaching nor will the students.

At this stage in the evolution of schooling and the movement from a paper based model of teaching to one that is predominantly digitally based the 'missing element' in most schools is the teacher.

The three vital questions you need to ask up front of your school is

i. What percentage of the teachers is provided a personal digital device or the funds to acquire such a device by their employer?

ii. What percentage of the teachers has normalised the use of the digital in their everyday teaching?

iii. If it is not 100% why not, and as a side question what is the school leadership doing to remedy the situation?

As Lee and Winzenried indicate in *The Use of Instructional Technology in Schools* (2009) normalisation entails the school successfully and simultaneously address the following nine human and technological variables.

- Teacher Acceptance
- Working with the Givens
- Teacher Training and Teacher Developmental Support
- Nature and Availability of the Technology
- Appropriate Content/Software
- Infrastructure
- Finance
- School and Education Authority Leadership
- Implementation (Lee and Winzenried, 2009, P225)

Mal Lee elaborates upon each point in a short article at - http://www.malleehome.com.

A special mention does need to be made about the readiness of a sub-group of the staff, the ICT team.

The operations of your ICT team could be markedly impacted by the adoption of a mode of BYOT. Some ICT teams keen to ensure they are supporting the shaping educational vision of the school will embrace and may in fact champion its introduction. Other ICT teams happy with their control over every aspect of the school's technology may well resent the mere suggestion of the idea. They will perceive it as a threat to their power.

The school leadership must be able to turn to its technology specialists to provide the requisite expert advice, and to identify the changes required to make best use of BYOT.

You'll need to decide if your 'ICT team' is ready to provide the requisite advice. One of the more successful case study schools had ultimately to ask the long-term head of the ICT team to resign following his refusal to support BYOT.

It is simply a case of you reading the lie of the land and deciding, knowing the people involved and how best to approach the group or to work around them.

b. Parents

An underlying assumption when introducing a model of BYOT is that all the student's homes have 'Net access, the parents have normalised the everyday use of the digital and will in the main soon be convinced of the educational worth of collaborating with the school in adopting a BYOT approach.

It is a good idea to check.

Bear in mind you could well have a significant number of parents still highly alienated with schooling who are very reluctant to even set foot in the school let alone allow their technology to be used in the classroom.

You'll need to work on securing the support of all your parents.

c. Students

Based on a plethora of research (Green and Hannon, 2007) (ACMA, 2007) (Tapscott, 2009) we are assuming that the students have normalised the everyday use of the digital and will be thinking within the networked mode where collaboration is the norm - and as such will be ready to collaborate in mounting a model of BYOT.

The case study experience reinforces that belief.

As indicated whether or not they opt to take that technology to class will depend in large on the authenticity of the school's desire to collaborate with them and the teacher making it worthwhile.

ii. Home-school collaboration

Authentic collaboration by the school with the home and respect for the contribution that can be made by the parents, often the grandparents and the students themselves is fundamental to taking best advantage of BYOT. Its centrality will become ever more apparent in your journey.

It is imperative you regard BYOT as a form of home – school collaboration.

iii. Principal

Every one of the case studies has not surprisingly affirmed – in both a positive and negative way - the importance of the principal in the successful whole school introduction of BYOT.

Without that leadership from the top the school will struggle.

We are prepared to go out on a limb and suggest that the based on the Project Tomorrow 2010 survey of school principals around two-thirds of principals today are in schools that have yet to normalise the total school use of the digital and as such will likely oppose the use of the student's technology.

That said there are very, very few school principals who are not committed to doing the utmost for all their students. That has invariably been their mission in life.

Your job will be to convince your head how BYOT can enhance the overall education of every child.

Remember the current school principal, as the CEO of the school is the person who will ultimately decide when your school will move on a model of BYOT.

That is why your head needs be ready or readied.

iv. Infrastructure

There are three key elements you need check upon.

- The 'teaching infrastructure'. In brief;

    o Every teaching room ought have an appropriate core suite of digital instructional technologies to allow every teacher to normalise the use of the digital in their teaching in that room. If the teaching technology is restricted to computer labs you'll have major readiness issues until you have at least whole of class digital presentation technology, an IWB or data projector, accessing the 'Net in every teaching room.

    o Every teacher has to have their own computer and probably their own personal digital device.

    o With BYOT the teachers need to be readied to teach with a suite of ever-evolving technologies. How that is best handled you'll need to decide.

    o High speed Wi Fi 'anywhere, any time' infrastructure across the total campus – with capacity to accommodate ever- increasing use. There is much to be said security wise for this network to be separate from the school administration network.

    o Supplementary technology/support to assist phased uptake of BYOT. Do you have the personal digital technology in each room that will allow the school to look after 'those without' while BYOT is being phased in?

- Digital communications suite

The school will want a tightly integrated, multi-faceted, multi-way digital communications suite, built around an integrating website, with personalised email communication with all within the school's community and a complementary set of social networking facilities that allows it to take full advantage of the efficiencies, economies, productivity and ultimately the synergies possible in a digital world, and in particular the student's personal technology.

- Management of digital resources

The current state of play in this area requires you to have someone on top of his or her game able to handle it.

Although much media hype is being generated about e-books, electronic texts, the great online offerings and the quality of the interactive multimedia

teaching materials the reality is that the digital publishers and resellers, including the Apples and Googles of the world are still largely approaching schooling from the traditional insular schooling paradigm, with most having yet to come to grips with a development like BYOT.

Their prime concern is how to make the most possible dollars in an ever-evolving scene.

It thus imperative you have in the position a person or team capable of leading the school through very dangerous territory, meeting the school's digital resource requirements without committing the school to expensive, rapidly dated arrangements while at the same time having a system to manage the digital resources while the industry gets it's act together.

v. Champions

Interestingly all the case studies have had their champion/s promoting the move. While it is admittedly a relatively small sample the situation this finding is wholly consistent with the organisational change literature.

In brief your school will need a champion, or preferably a team of champions guiding the move to BYOT. Sometimes in the case studies it was the head, an assistant principal, a director of information services, a head of technology or a committed teacher – but regardless of who it is, your school will need that champion to shape the initiative. You will need 'doers' and it really matters not what formal position they occupy or indeed if it is a parent, student or member of the school's community playing the role.

vi. Education Authority (if applicable)

The ideal is to have a local education authority, like Forsyth County that works with all its schools in the introduction of BYOT and provides the requisite direction, infrastructure, support and training.

However it is already clear there will be significant variability in the outlook of educational authorities towards 'their' schools using a BYOT model. While some are already assisting interested schools by helping with the campus Wi Fi and student network access others have central office ICT teams doing their utmost to maintain the present 'one size fits all' approach.

You'll need to check your authority's readiness. Importantly you'll also want your principal to check the scene.

Your School.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned readiness factors and your call on where your school is at with each where would you position your school on this five point evolutionary scale?

Paper-based/early digital/digital/early networked/networked

      1--------2---------3--------4---------5

- **Paper based** – is where with the majority of your teachers are using in the main paper, pens and the teaching board – be it black, green or white – in their everyday teaching. Of note this was still the norm in the vast majority of the classrooms of the OECD in 2009. (Lee and Winzenried, 2009).

- **Early digital** – is where 60% -70% of your teachers are using the digital in their everyday teaching, and as such nearing the critical mass stage and 'digital take off' (Lee and Gaffney, 2008).

- **Digital** – where all the teaching staff have normalised the use of the digital in their everyday teaching, but where the school is still operating as a discrete, 'stand alone' entity primarily within the traditional school walls

- **Early networked** – where the staff has normalised the use of the digital in their everyday teaching and are beginning to use the networks to operate outside the school walls and the normal school hours and starting to 'teach' more collaboratively with the students and their homes – educationally and/or administratively – and the wider networked community (Lee and Finger, 2010).

- **Networked** – where the staff has normalised the use of the digital in their everyday teaching and is collaborating authentically with all the parties in and outside the school walls, professional and non-professional in the 24/7/365 teaching of the young.

Conclusion

Your reading of the school's readiness ought then inform the school's development strategy and elicit the type and extent of remedying required before you adopt your initial BYOT model and move to the implementation stage.