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## Think IT: supporting the inclusion of parents as co-partners in the development of critical digital literacy amongst UK key stage 3 pupils

### Student Dissertation

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## MON: Think IT: supporting the inclusion of parents as co-partners in the development of critical digital literacy amongst UK key stage 3 pupils (Nicola Morris)

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This presentation will introduce a web resource designed to support parents as co-partners in the development of critical digital literacy amongst key stage 3 pupils in the UK.

March (2013) highlights how with the “the depth and breadth of the Internet becoming more and more accessible,” increasing availability of open educational resources (OER), new technological solutions and learner centred approaches towards teaching had led to flipped approaches to teaching. Increasingly learners are using the internet to research and develop underpinning knowledge out of the school setting, either individually or collaboratively. Hague and Patton (2012 p 9) highlight the underlying assumption that “having grown up with technology, young people have a wealth of digital technology skills.” Evidence presented by Morris (2013) and Byron (2008) indicates that many students and teachers identify difficulties thinking critically and judiciously about the web resources they access.

The principle of guided interaction (Plowman and Stevens 2007) recognises the vital importance of developing competence with technology beyond the operational (how to use), to situating its use and including an understanding of the role of technology and developing dispositions (including critical thinking) in order to make appropriate use of resources and tools increasingly available. Kadel (2013) reminds us that both the home setting and support of parents is generally a key contributor to achievement. Byron (2008) amongst others, highlights, however how many parents do not feel that they have the skills or knowledge needs to support their children when using technology. The role that parents can therefore play in supporting a critical use of the internet may not therefore be being realised.

The presentation will introduce “Think IT”. This resource, providing guidance and supporting for parents on how they can support their children when using the web at home for school work purposes, is housed within Word Press as a series of individual topic resources. The focus is on the UK key stage 3 age group (ages 11 – 14) as it is here when the move to freer and more independent study use of the internet first occurs.

Think IT will feature a number of short scenarios, presented via short video or animation, which typify the difficulties encountered by parents. These are enhanced by some currently available OER and specifically written resources. It is envisaged that the use of the comments function will allow users to suggest further additions or resources. Each of the created resources will also be submitted for use as OER.

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30 January 2014

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OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' online conference 2014

This resource will develop both understanding and approaches which can be taken leading to greater confidence amongst parents. The resource will enable parents to be included as co-educators and supporters of their children's development as critical users of open resources. Delegates will be invited to share suggestions for future content and development of the site.

#### References

- Byron, T. (2008) Safer Children in a Digital World; The report of the Byron Review [online]. Available at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101021152907/http://publications.education.gov.uk/default/pagefunction=productdetails&pagemode=publications&productid=dcsf-00334-2008&> (Accessed 23 December 2013)
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- Plowman L., McPake J. & Stephen C. (2008) Just picking it up? Young children learning with technology at home. Cambridge Journal of Education 38 (3) 303-319 [online] Available at [http://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/10854734/Plowman\\_et\\_al\\_2008\\_Just\\_picking\\_it\\_up\\_.pdf](http://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/10854734/Plowman_et_al_2008_Just_picking_it_up_.pdf) (Accessed 30 December 2013)

## Extra content

Link to [Think IT](#) - very much a continually developing artefact



[Nicola Morris](#)

12:24 on 10 February 2014

[+ Add extra content](#)

## Embedded Content

### Conference presentation

[Conference presentation](#)

added by [Nicola Morris](#)

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[Nicola Morris](#)

12:33am 1 January 1970 [Permalink](#)

Copy of poster developed to explain background to this subject/investigation



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

11:04pm 11 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Apologies I thought I was clicking a link to the poster instead I was touching the 'flag as spam' - reading on the iPad without glasses on. Sorry!



[Jonathan Vernon](#)

11:12pm 11 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

With children age 15/17 we have passed through this and by all accounts the entire family are equally good or inept. I find we each do things so differently it is like comparing four different musical instruments. We kept computers in a common space until 18 months ago which more than anything else let us parents keep an eye, help them out ... and to learn from them.



[Cara Saul](#)

9:01pm 12 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Nicola the Think IT link did not work for me - is it active. Think I may have to copy the URL if you would place in a comment. Thanks cara



[Nicola Morris](#)

9:23pm 12 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Hi Cara, the link is [highertraining.wordpress.com](http://highertraining.wordpress.com). Let me know if you carry on having difficulties



[Sarah-Louise Quinnell](#)

10:57pm 15 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Nicola,

I was wondering to what extent the parent's own digital literacy impacted upon the child's development in this area?

Secondly, how would you respond to people like my Mum (aged 72) who spent her life working with children, who feel that the focus should be on traditional literacy and numeracy not on digital things which change so quickly?



[Nicola Morris](#)

10:31am 17 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Sarah,

These are two very valuable questions. One of the conclusions I have drawn is that there needs to be much more research in this area.

It would follow that if you have the skills then you would be able to support however the new literacy we need isn't just about being able to be a digital user. Kadel (see refereces in abstract for link) amongst others and many anecdotal reports ( more anedotal than empirically based) show that parents do have a positive influence if it is only through showing an interest.

I tend to agree with your mum if I am honest. The skills of being able to comunciate and process information have not changed they are just being wrapped differently and maybe some are concentrating on the wrapping more than the actual skills. As with anything its making wise selection rather than just adopting a blanket approach.



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

8:58pm 18 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Following the live presentations, we asked each speaker to respond to questions posed by audience members. In the short time available, it was not possible to put all of the questions submitted to the speaker for a response. We asked all speakers if they would respond to the unanswered questions here on Cloudworks. Here are all of the questions asked during the session:

- ▶ Do you think teachers also (as well as parents) believe that learner skills are better than they are?
- ▶ As an online teacher I agree that children rarely think about the information they find - I have a lot of problems with plagiarised homework. Wikipedia is now apparently one of the most reliable sources because everything has to be cited
- ▶ I find it interesting that parents feel their children know more, considering that the majority of today's parents of young children (30-50 year olds) belong to a generation that uses computers at work and at home a lot.
- ▶ Why on earth are we not teaching research skills and critical thinking to schoolkids?
- ▶ I wonder whether children could be persuaded to move away from the texts they find online to try to explain to a parent what they've understood from that online source? it highlights where you've understood or otherwise.....
- ▶ If as a parent through engaging with your child you find they are far behind or far ahead would you want to use the technology to circumvent where the school/national curriculum is failing them?
- ▶ I find it interesting that parents feel their children know more, considering that the majority of today's parents of young children (30-50 year olds) belong to a generation that uses computers at work and at home a lot.
- ▶ Worth a look at digilit leicester <http://www.digilitleic.com/>
- ▶ I wonder whether children could be persuaded to move away from the texts they find online to try to explain to a parent what they've understood from that online

source? it highlights where you've understood or otherwise.....

- ▶ If as a parent through engaging with your child you find they are far behind or far ahead would you want to use the technology to circumvent where the school/national curriculum is failing them?
- ▶ any plans to give this to schools etc
- ▶ its a shame social learning cant move down the curriculum
- ▶ yes, what plans for disseminating this to schools - and wider?
- ▶ Do skills need to be embedded?
- ▶ I think this sort of thing should be in a 'lifeskills' class
- ▶ It's the same critical skills that should be used in reading a newspaper or any other source
- ▶ there is definitely an issue with students being able to extract the info they need - Its almost like there it just too much to process, a lot of students want to be told exactly which websites to use



[Nicola Morris](#)

9:28pm 21 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Please find below my responses to the various questions and points.

**Do you think teachers also (as well as parents) believe that learner skills are better than they are?** I have no evidence to support this. The research evidence dating back to 2009 gives a number of examples of teachers expressing concerns about cutting and pasting, accepting material at face value, not referencing sources.. The comment below from one of the conference attendees appears to reinforce this view.

**As an online teacher I agree that children rarely think about the information they find - I have a lot of problems with plagiarised homework. Wikipedia is now apparently one of the most reliable sources because everything has to be cited**

Thank you for sharing this. Interestingly in my own research most children answer yes to the statement "I should trust Wikipedia at all"

**I find it interesting that parents feel their children know more, considering that the majority of today's parents of young children (30-50 year olds) belong to a generation that uses computers at work and at home a lot.**

That's certainly true but can we really compare the uses. A work is most use more application based, at home socially for sending quick messages, uploading pictures, buying products etc. Surely there is a difference between this and the need to analyse, research objectively etc.

**Why on earth are we not teaching research skills and critical thinking to schoolkids?** Good question. The curriculum appears to integrate these skills into many subjects. Perhaps it becomes too implied rather than being explicitly taught.

**I wonder whether children could be persuaded to move away from the texts they find online to try to explain to a parent what they've understood from that online source? it highlights where you've understood or otherwise.....** That's exactly the sort of contribution I'm hoping parents and other interested parties will add to the Think IT site. Thank you for this suggestion

**If as a parent through engaging with your child you find they are far behind or far ahead would you want to use the technology to circumvent where the school/national curriculum is failing them?** Parents who feel this way will inevitably take the steps they feel are right to help their children and the web offers many possibilities here. Some schools do signpost towards sources of support (both to catch up and extend).

**Worth a look at digilit leicester** <http://www.digilitleic.com/> Thanks for the link.

**any plans to give this to schools etc** t at the moment but once my EMA is out of the way I will think about how this can be disseminated.

**its a shame social learning cant move down the curriculum** I agree – open educational resources and web 2.0 technologies make this a possibility with all its advantages.

**yes, what plans for disseminating this to schools - and wider?** I haven't yet made any plans but will be considering this shortly. I would welcome ideas here...

**Do skills need to be embedded?** The research I did certainly points to the fact that the skills are not fully developed in this age group. Do you think these should feature in key stage assessments?

**I think this sort of thing should be in a 'lifeskills' class** I could see how it could be added quite well to the PHSE curriculum

**It's the same critical skills that should be used in reading a newspaper or any other source** I wonder what anyone else thinks. Is there an added complexity when faced with so many sources to choose from?

**there is definitely an issue with students being able to extract the info they need - Its almost like there it just too much to process, a lot of students want to be told exactly which websites to use** This issue came out in the research with around 30% of respondents wishing they were told which ones to use. Perhaps this indicates how overwhelming the choices can be and that a structured approach towards searching needs to be taken over time.

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