

# The tools of transformation

## A brave new world in the field of education...

**E**ducation service delivery is undergoing radical transformation, which is based on two key 'tools' – diplomas and structured investment in ICT.

The national diploma structure comes into force this new school year and has caused a fundamental shift in how routes through 'schooling' and 'learning' are charted. Blending theory, experience-based and vocational qualifications that equal or rival traditional curricula, the onus is now on those delivering educational services to ensure that routes are clear, relevant and tailored to the needs of those who undertake them. Diplomas are delivered in partnership with other providers, which breaks the 'autonomy' of the single education institution and coerces schools to collaborate with other education providers such as FE colleges and employers.

The enforced inclusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into standard education capital schemes, where previously this was unheard of, has been most visible through Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the Academies programmes. Linking performance and reward around a structured ICT investment has redefined the contractual relationships that dominated in PFI. This has also ensured that the ongoing transformation of education service delivery is now directly linked to innovation, new technology adoption, and finding creative ways of meeting a mobile and personalised agenda.

Individually, each of these is significant. Both are geared towards increased collaboration and a move away from the traditional, didactic structures that are so familiar. Together, the impact on how educational services and curriculum delivery models are structured around

opportunities to deliver a learner led experience is vast.

This combination has created a tipping point that creates models for service delivery that are reaching beyond the confines of Local Authorities (LA) and the school gate. In addition, with the imminent demise of the Learning Skills Council, local authorities will become the commissioner of services for both the school and post-16 sector. The developing role of LA-wide 14-19 partnerships has moved beyond the curriculum planning stage to the role of commissioner and the arbiter of standards. With clear parallels to the expanding role of Primary Care Trusts in the healthcare sector, these tools of transformation are critical to moving the education sector into alignment with demand led, user focused models.

### Personalisation through technology

As the interoperability and network capabilities available within schools increase, so does the ability of learners and teachers to explore models of learning that allow for circumstances and preferences to be accommodated. Given the traditional hardware price curve, organisations that are not required to adopt 'bleeding edge' technologies naturally accrue the advantages of adopting more stable and mature solutions. This is particularly true in schools – where the uptake of PDAs (as one limited example) is readily years behind mainstream commercial use. Schools and learners, however, are at the forefront of building on existing technology platforms and hardware typologies to create innovative and unexpected solution sets. The use of gaming technologies and second generation interfaces is also having a measurable impact. Some of this rapid acceleration has been fostered through the

Academies programme, which has, to some extent, enjoyed deregulation of local authority structures.

Through the wealth of data and teaching and learning material, which is now stored and accessed online; through the ubiquity of services and access devices both at home or in public spaces; through the arrival of the so-called digital natives and their insatiable appetite for access, flexibility and on demand services, the curriculum delivery model of this decade and beyond is now wholly focused on ensuring equality and global provision. This underpins the opportunities to create learner led models and to push for greater engagement, exploration and, ultimately, tailored achievement within the existing learning provider infrastructures.

### Personalisation through curriculum delivery

The radical remodelling of old pedagogies and the move towards developing thinking and learning skills, rather than subject-based or content-driven knowledge, has forced the collaboration of industry, learning facilities, professionals, and the private and public sectors to meet the demands of the next generation. This workforce will no longer find immobile, abstract teaching and learning satisfactory. Now, through the combination of experience-based learning and mobility through localities, organisations and even virtual worlds, education service delivery is uprooted from traditional static environs and relies on utility-based computing, flexible working hours, multi-faceted professional support services, and the freedom to create a structure that is geared towards the learner's needs.



Through BSF, capital investment will also provide opportunities to link regeneration initiatives to provide extended services and education located within different settings for the whole community – not just for traditional school populations. This has implications for workforce remodelling and moving towards the role of teacher as facilitator, supported by a wider range of support staff such as higher level teaching assistants. Employers are co-teaching some of the diploma units, and parents or carers are also being trained to take on the wider teacher role. With the development of extended schools and the collocation of services, schools are operating as community hubs, with families having the opportunity to learn together and extend access beyond the school day.

**Bridging the corporate and commercial**

There is desire to explore how new models of business and transaction management can be created to match the digital native style of working. Fluidic, collaborative and outcome focused, traditional models of service and product delivery are now no more relevant than chalk-and-talk of ‘ago’. By working with the local authorities and learning providers who grapple with these challenges today, striving to maintain operational and quality standards under close scrutiny, answers to the following can be found:

- How to allow for and adopt an individual’s investment in technology into your network;
- How to deliver services to learners and families where languages and cultures are as varied and diverse as in any global commercial operation;
- How to stimulate innovation whilst maintaining standards.

Successful initiatives from schools are based on a willingness to embrace the new. Providers entering the system now have always had access to the internet, and learners are increasingly demanding less of a distinction between media-rich personal experiences and the formal learning environment. Programmes of investment are geared towards embracing and rewarding those who are able to demonstrate new ways of working. Compare this to the user hostile environment defined in corporate environments where access to devices of choice is still largely defined by grade, function and value. It is surprising that even now, large IT organisations don’t roll-out networked personal access devices as standard – and yet in the new schools and through the new delivery models, anything less than ubiquity of access and on demand computing is fast becoming untenable.

Some of the most pressing and complex challenges facing 21st Century Britain are around the integration of the diverse range of ethnicities and backgrounds into a cohesive, productive society. Schools and other learning providers do this every day and reach far beyond their boundaries to impact positively on families, communities and institutions/learners within other countries. The diplomas mandate mobility – with learning being undertaken in the most appropriate venue – not necessarily in the originating school. With this kind of approach, how can this future generation of leaders and employees reconcile working in a static office, in fixed teams, doing repetitive and unrewarding activities? It is here that the tools of transformation retain their currency – the expectations that

today’s learner will bring to the workplace is not of locked down, barrier laden environments. They will have arrived fresh from working across geographies, and expecting to make new, intuitive personal networks and groupings. The concept of anytime, anywhere learning needs to be taken into commercial settings.

The current ‘perfect storm’ wreaking havoc in the financial and housing sectors is paralleled by an equally high impact storm that is coming to the fore in education. The challenge in this instance, however, is not to mitigate or even dampen down this impact; the challenge is rather to see how to harness the dynamism and positive change agenda, and both extrapolate this across public sector service delivery structures, but also to cascade the learning and practice derived from this period into our commercial and corporate sectors.

The tools of transformation emerging and growing in education today will be the standard operating models of businesses and industry tomorrow. Learners today will not conform to structures that impede their ability to work in mobile, self-directed ways. There is a clear challenge that this transformation programme offers – and success will be defined by those who are best able to adapt and embrace this brave new world.



Christopher Stark  
 Head of Transformation  
 cstark@navigantconsulting.com

Jan Parnell  
 Head of Transformation  
 jan.parnell@navigantconsulting.com

Navigant Consulting  
 24 Monument Street  
 Centurion House  
 London EC3R 8AJ

Tel: +44 (0)20 7015 2377  
 Fax: +44 (0)20 74691110  
 www.navigantconsulting.co.uk