

E-safety: evaluation of training materials for initial teacher education

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"The Internet has brought vast new opportunities to the education sector and has affected the way that teaching is delivered, the location of learning, communication with parents and the way schools are managed and administered." (BCS, 2008)

This briefing paper outlines research undertaken to determine the needs of teachers in training with respect to e-safety in the changing world of online education. It describes the findings and the product that arose from the consideration by academics from four leading initial teacher-training institutes in England. The research, a four month project undertaken across four universities, was commissioned by Childnet International* to identify if and how e-safety education could be incorporated into current initial teacher education programmes. Furthermore, the research sought to assess what were the needs of initial teacher education providers in relation to e-safety education for ICT trainee teachers. The research was funded jointly by Microsoft and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

With the growing recognition of the importance of e-safety and the need to better equip teachers to both understand the issues and educate pupils, the team believed it was vital to assess how those entering the profession could be trained and supported. The research sought to review the current teacher trainees' understanding of the issues, the best way to deliver this training and the trainees views on current e-safety resources which were currently available to schools for key stage 3. Furthermore, it was vital to establish the relevant teaching standards and identify which other subject areas may be interested in using e-safety resources. The full report describes the implementation of e-safety tuition in initial teacher education programmes and the recommendations arising from that work including what modifications to existing resources would help trainees. It is available from: <http://www.pgce.soton.ac.uk/eSafety>

The study included the:

- expert evaluation of a number of e-safety resources;
- development of an online evaluation form to assess the resources chosen;
- presenting e-safety sessions to 400 trainee teachers;
- presenting further resources online; and
- capturing over 73,000 words of comments.

The findings from this research highlighted a number of important challenges such as time limitations imposed by a full teacher education curriculum, the need for trainee teachers to prioritise and meet the standards and the fact that trainees have very different needs from those of teachers. However, the research also found overwhelming support from the trainees interviewed as to the importance of e-safety and the need for schools to address this issue.

* Childnet International is a non-profit organisation with the mission to "help make the internet a great and safe place for children" <http://www.childnet-int.org>

JENNY'S STORY

The findings can be summarised:

E-safety should be embedded within the teaching standards requirements to meet the statutory regulation.

There are a number of models of implementing the training. However, face-to-face methods showed a higher uptake and they were more highly valued by trainees.

An online portal should be developed with resources, information and advice, specifically to meet the needs of trainee teachers and their tutors.

The resource identified for face-to-face sessions with trainee teachers was Childnet's Jenny's Story. This short film which tells the true story of what happened to one 13 year old on the internet, proved to be effective in capturing the trainee's attention. It stimulated discussion and highlighted an important concern.

The resources presented online for trainees to explore and evaluate were MSN's Rome Group and from Childnet Me, my mobile and I and a glossary of terms. The resources and evaluation forms were accessed through the Childnet Know IT All portal
<http://www.childnet-int.org/KIA>

The evaluation of the impact of Jenny's Story as a stimulus to promote discussion and raise awareness, was very compelling, with 84% of the trainees being wiser after the session. As one trainee put it, "*I think this was an excellent video to be shown ... The only improvement is to ensure it is shown in as many schools as possible*".

In addition, and most importantly, the trainees realised they would need to access additional resources to deal with e-safety issues confidently. Trainee teachers identified opportunities in their curriculum areas to present those issues. Some were delightfully creative in their responses, for example from an English specialist; "*As an English teacher I could work it in to any scheme of work which deals with difficult human issues in literature. Issues which create an ambiguity for the reader between what is perceived as right and what is perceived as wrong. Manipulation and deceit are other themes that can be found in literature where this topic could work in nicely.*"

It is acknowledged that teacher education programmes are under extreme pressure of time because of the size of the curriculum the trainees have to experience, in frequently very short blocks of time. The issue is compounded by the nature of the study being complex and diverse. It is:

- **practical** and includes the skills of teaching;
- **vocational** including attitudes and aspects of a career in teaching;
- **theoretical** through knowing the under-pinning rationale for the practices being promoted; and
- **academic** through understanding and reflecting upon the processes.

The full report of the research was published in August 2007. Since then the TDA have sent to every teacher training establishment in England a DVD based around Jenny's Story and includes resources for teacher trainers and trainees. These are also available from the Childnet International portal <http://www.childnet-int.org/kia/traineteachers> The report of the Byron Review has also been published. There is a heightened awareness of the need to ensure that pupils "stay safe" <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview> The work of CEOP and Becta continues to support teachers and help protect our children
<http://www.ceop.gov.uk> <http://www.becta.org.uk>

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Dr John Woollard
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