

## Education Technology Working Group Report to the International Education Council – June 2014

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**REMIT:** At the last meeting of the International Education Council a working group was set up to examine educational technology in the context of exports. The remit encompassed the entire educational technology sector with objectives focused on how to generate larger business opportunities internationally, to share best practice and to understand UK capability in educational technology.

**PREPARATORY ACTIONS:** to inform the agenda for a working group meeting held on Friday 9 May 2014 Council members and the wider sector were invited to share their experiences through a short questionnaire. The Group Chair conducted telephone interviews with a variety of multinational companies and UK consultants working overseas.

**WORKING GROUP:** Working with the BIS secretariat to ensure a broad representation of the sector, those who accepted invitations to join the working group meeting were:

Emily Ashwell - UKTI  
Gavin Dykes - Cellcove  
Vicky Elliott - BIS  
Emma House - Publishers Association  
Mike Klym - BIS  
Kate Lewis - Frog  
David Martin - British Council  
James Neill - GL Education Group  
Peter Oates - Rising Stars  
Christina Preston - Mirandanet  
William Prieto-Parra - BESA  
Oliver Quinlan - Nesta  
Justin Reilly - Pearson  
Phil Richards - JISC  
Prof Belinda Tynan - Open University  
Julia von klonowski - Oracle  
Caroline Wright - BESA  
Jim Wynn - Promethean  
Chair: Dominic Savage - BESA

**AGENDA:** the working group meeting looked at

- describing what is the UK's international offer – in what areas is our system leading edge and what leading edge products, solutions and services we can offer internationally,
- which organisations best reflect and support the offer – understanding the UK capability and best practice with successful exporters,
- how best to generate or respond to business opportunities internationally – encouraging those seeking system change to look to the UK and facilitating the UK response,
- areas of third party collaboration – working with global players

all with a view to defining how best to boost our export potential with actions:

- for the industry, education and academia to pursue in combination
- and what government could do to assist.

#### **CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE RESEARCH AND WORKING GROUP MEETING:**

The UK is exporting educational technology and supporting services to many countries. However, greater co-ordination could enable more multi-company activity. More typically, 'successes' are where a single company has sold a product or products to a country/state/city as an aggregated purchase for large numbers of institutions.

It is recognised that the UK has traditionally had capability and expertise in a whole range of areas, including: infrastructure, hardware, MIS, learning platforms, digital resources (both content software and peripherals) as well as training services and has more recently developed its offer in areas such as assessment, eBooks, learning CMS and integration platforms. Organisations in the public sector are also called upon from overseas, the British Council and JISC in particular.

Smaller UK companies often find initial success selling to international schools and build export experience from this base. English-medium schools can be a way into markets and to developing contacts that support larger opportunities. Events are key to the sector: Bett London and the full range of overseas exhibitions that have developed in recent years have produced major opportunities for companies. The questionnaire responses highlighted how the increase in UKTI TAP grants during 2013/14 had encouraged some companies to participate in a number of events within the year and this produced strong evidence that being seen to be 'a player' at successive events across the globe is a powerful confidence booster for agents and distributors and has delivered some notable business for single companies during the year.

Some smaller companies have been remarkably successful with aggregated sales to countries, states or cities for all schools: initial triggers often being Bett or an overseas event.

Larger companies are successful or becoming so in more challenging settings. Bett London, the Education World Forum and other overseas events produce opportunities for dialogue with overseas ministers and ministries that are often the starting point for major business.

It is recognised that multi-nationals such as Microsoft, Intel, Cisco, Oracle and HP are conveniently placed to have dialogues at national, ministerial level and their names are often associated with larger projects. Such projects are usually delivered with the involvement of additional suppliers, and there is an opportunity here for greater involvement from the UK. Evidence from previous discussions was that there

was no inbuilt bias against the UK industry but there is a lack of knowledge about what the UK had to offer and of the capabilities of UK companies.

It was recognised that there are many more opportunities internationally that the UK could pursue, through articulating and promoting our capability and a project management champion to lead on more major business, at the level of country system change.

**DELIVERABLES:** There was easy agreement on there being substantial opportunities in many markets, an appetite to address these opportunities, evidence of capability from the UK to deliver the component parts, but with the requirement for more co-ordination and project leadership than current capacity would allow to be pursued.

There were concerns that after the 2013/14 year during which UKTI TAP funding had encouraged some impressive UK groups to appear at a variety of events overseas, the massive cut in the number of events in this sector being supported in 2014/15 was a retrograde step.

The working group welcomes that UKTI Education has a focus on education technology and would like to work with the unit to develop some of these ideas. In particular, the three associations: BESA, PA and TechUK agreed to look at how one might map the current UK offer.

There are a number of activities that could support this sector's education efforts, including:

- i. Developing a core script articulating the breadth of the UK's offer, the wide range of providers and capability,
- ii. Develop and provide a market briefing (marketing collateral) for international educational technology for shared use by government and the commercial sector,
- iii. Potential UK offer(s) in fast developing areas, e.g. assessment
- iv. An advisory service for overseas governments on educational technology. To kick this off, the proposal would be to identify 3-4 key markets and put together a bespoke briefing event for each to be delivered during Bett week 2015 to key visitors from each market. Each briefing event should include Government Ministers and/or senior civil servants, with representatives from industry trade bodies and key commercial partners. The briefings would give these governments the opportunity to talk through their countries' needs and have immediate impartial advice offered within the session as a precursor to some co-ordinated follow-up. The scope of such follow-up should be defined on a generic basis, recognising what input might come from government as well as the commercial sector, but the offer will then need to be bespoke to each market.
- v. Develop a twitter account/hashtag to flag and promote UK educational technology successes so that each time a deal is secured internationally,

such success could be promoted via social media to continue building the reputation of the UK as the place to come for educational technology solutions.

On the basis of recognising some good potential for the sector and some practical ways forward, the working group would like to work with the sector and Government to contribute to future work.

Dominic Savage - Chair