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ITSI at Bett 2018

ITSI provides a comprehensive solution that blends e-books with an integrated platform to seamlessly share educational resources and user-generated content. It saves educators time and provides learners with personalised curriculum materials to support their learning. From digital textbooks, through a device agnostic app known as miEbooks, to analysis of assessment results, they aim to combine the academic rigour of traditional textbooks with the flexibility of technology.

ITSI provides students and teachers with the digital tools to enhance existing curriculum content and to personalise their textbooks by inserting videos, images and annotations. ITSI further provides insights into student learning behaviour that allows teachers to assess, support and personalise learning through adaptation or accessing different resources to match the students’ needs.

This year at Bett, ITSI will be providing one lucky teacher a trip of a lifetime, exploring South Africa’s heritage, and education system and first-hand experience of how technology is transforming classrooms in Africa. Visitors will be entered into the draw when they book a free demo with ITSI before or during Bett 2018.
About the miEbooks app

The miEbooks app has been especially designed for students as an e-book reader and is available on any Android, iOS or Windows device. Students' unique login details enables them to access their personal e-book library online or offline, so they can access their learning anywhere, anytime.

Students can add notes to specific sections of a textbook, make highlights, add freehand sketches and generate automated summaries of highlighted text for study purposes. All the students' notes, sketches and highlights are stored on the tablet and backed-up in the cloud. This means that should a student lose his/her tablet, they can simply download the app, their e-books and all personal annotation onto a new device at no extra cost. With the ITSI Solution, Your Content Finds You®.

Students access personalised content and multimedia resources shared by their teachers in a single location, so no more lost notes or handouts. They can take the assessments created by their teachers, with their results automatically handed in.

The app's integrated calendar means homework and upcoming events are automatically shared with students. Schools can save on paper and print costs by sending newsletters automatically – making miEbooks a one-stop solution for all educational needs.
Meet the team

Gary Bryant, UK Country Manager
Passionate about the power of technology to transform learning and lives, he has been in the edtech business since before edtech was even a thing!

He has worked with edtech start-ups to FTSE 100 giants helping schools and colleges on projects large and small - from a single primary school to an implementation for every school in a country - with solutions incorporating platforms for teaching and learning, content and school wide management.

Today, he is focused on helping schools to combine the academic rigour of curriculum content with the power of technology supported by research-based practice into how learning happens.

About ITSI

ITSI was established in 2000 under the banner of IT School Intellect, providing ICT and an integrated IT curriculum to both private and public schools in all nine provinces in South Africa. In 2006, IT School Innovation was formed and evolved to include all subjects, thereby making it more relevant to both students and educators in all learning areas. Since then, the organisation grew to not only incorporate all subjects, but also to develop mobile learning solutions that evolved into the ITSI Solution – the cornerstone of the business today.

In November 2013, financial services company, PSG, acquired a 50% shareholding in ITSI Holdings to extend its interest in the education sector.

In 2016, ITSI moved beyond the territories of South Africa with the implementation of the ITSI Solution in Namibia and the UK.

ITSI provides educators and students with a digital solution that enhances and simplifies the teaching experience at every touchpoint. Our teaching technologies are designed with the educator in mind, enabling them to easily combine their own content – both found and personally created – with the most up-to-date
curriculum content from leading publishers or the Internet. Our products are designed to work with all major smart device operating systems, enabling educators, lecturers, and facilitators to deliver student-specific content to any device.

During Bett, ITSI will be showcasing some of their key solutions features including how user-analytics is making learning visible and enabling educators to personalise their teaching, how content can be delivered seamlessly and how the traditional textbook can be enhanced to provide both a unique multimedia experience and be personalised to the student’s individual needs.

**Daily sessions**

Three sessions are offered daily at

11:00    Do you make learning visible and influence the learning process?
13:00    Can tradition and tech work together to enhance teaching and learning?
15:00    The digital textbook – is it a book behind glass fad or a unique way of delivering content?

For more information on ITSI, visit: www.it.si
Turning the page on technology

By Gary Bryant, UK Country Manager at ITSI

As the recently released OECD 2017 Education Report shows, preparing students for the future isn’t an easy task. It is easy to understand the growing demand for education when the future economic benefits for the learner is writ large. However, for many, methods of teaching remained the same for a long time: students reading from textbooks, writing notes to process information, and gaining all the key knowledge needed for the world around them. The boom in technology at the turn of the millennium, however, saw traditional methods of teaching become overshadowed by new devices and software packages that promised to revolutionise the learning landscape. In all of this, the need for knowledge and skills remains. The focus is now on creating a 21st Century education for students.

With this in mind, should we be ignoring traditional methods of learning altogether, or actually integrating these with technology?

Choosing one method over another isn’t the answer to improving the education system; combining these two great methods of learning, however, is. Blended learning is a 21st Century approach which combines face-to-face instructions from teachers in the classroom whilst including technology as a building block, to expand on the content of the lesson. Although the use of technology in the classroom isn’t anything new, using technology for a one-hour computing class a week isn’t the same as adopting blended learning. This innovative method takes the use of technology further to enhance learning by providing opportunities for independent learning.

Undoubtedly, traditional methods of learning in the 21st Century classroom, come with their limitations. Adopting technology, with the example of eBooks, alongside these traditional methods, can bridge the gap whilst also enhancing the learning process.
The consistent flow of updated information

For example, printed textbook learning can limit the information provided to students. Textbooks are often produced annually for the next academic year. Although the key information concerning theories are unlikely to change massively in a year, real-life examples can change dramatically. Take the subject of politics for example; sixth form students would benefit from the key theories found in printed textbooks year on year, but with unpredictable political changes - the huge upheaval of Brexit and the 2017 General Election for instance - it’s unlikely that textbooks would pick these up until the following academic year at best. This could hinder a student’s learning and potentially leave them naïve to the current changes of a topic in the modern world. Using eBooks gives students, the opportunity to interleave and access updated and contextual information alongside the established theories.

eBooks can also be updated by teachers at their own discretion adapting learning to the individual classroom. Teachers can insert images, videos and hyperlinks alongside the original text in the book as examples to further enhance the learning experience for students.

The constant availability of new information allows for students to wholly learn about a subject at the tip of their fingertips in a fun and engaging way rather than simply viewing subject material as information needed for exams.

Providing students with freedom and independence

Adopting technology in the classroom can provide students with immediate information at the touch of an app. eBooks can be downloaded to their personal devices as well as accessed at school. Instead of carrying home various textbooks, students can simply download the app and access their textbooks through their personal devices. With many students owning personal devices, it gives them easy accessibility to their learning notes. This ultimately allows for students to access information at any time, from anywhere, creating many opportunities for them to carry out independent learning at home!

Initially, blending technology and traditional methods of learning has faced skepticism and fear. Increasingly, however, schools and teachers have realised
that it undeniably enhances the learning experience. It allows students to learn in a multitude of ways providing undeniable benefits too. The use of technology in all aspects of our lives isn’t going away anytime soon, so instead of turning a blind eye to it within the education sector, it’s time for us to adopt a 21st Century attitude to learning and combine the new innovative methods of technology with the effectiveness of traditional learning methods.

-Ends-

Edtech – are we asking the right questions?
By Gary Bryant, UK Country Manager at ITSI

There is no doubt that technology has become an integral part of education. As the technology continues to evolve and impact on the way we create, share and digest information, the collective discussion on these topics has a tendency to be rather overwhelming. Which topics should educators be paying attention to, and how can we best adapt our classrooms?

Here, Gary Bryant from ITSI explains the benefits of a broad-church approach to technology in the classroom and looks at some of the latest research on how we all learn, unpacking some of the most common ‘teaching myths’ that persist within the education system, while providing insight into why this may be.

Cutting edge educational research and teaching trends are ever evolving. However, this information is not always filtered down to those who are the key contributors to the education system – teachers. With increasingly heavy workloads, teachers can run the risk of being out of the loop with academic research.

The integration of technology has led to a number of developments that have made learning more accessible, including a focus on differentiation in the classroom, which involves adopting activities for mixed abilities, and an increased emphasis on a blended learning approach, that sees traditional teaching methods utilised alongside technology.

However, within this sphere also exists ‘neuro myths’; ideas and approaches to teaching and learning which aren’t necessarily backed by research but have gained
significant traction with teachers and leaders alike through well intentioned “experts” and CPD programmes.

-Ends-

Learning styles
By Dr. Lieb Liebenberg, CEO at ITSI

The idea of learning styles is perhaps one of the most recognised, and most debunked, education theories. It’s based on the idea that children learn most effectively when lessons are aimed at different sensory receivers (also called the Visual Auditory Kinetic Model). For example, the idea that some may learn more effectively through visual methods of teaching, like videos or demonstrations, whereas others absorb information best when it is conveyed through auditory lessons (think lecture style). So, if a teacher knows what sort of learner a child is, we can optimise their learning by presenting material and using language in a way that appeals to them. That’s a straightforward assumption and one that has common sense value. However, research rebuts the idea of learning styles all together. Cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham, an expert in the field, explains that it is not catering to the individual child’s learning style that affects achievement, but rather the utilising of the modality that best supports specific content that determines whether it is mastered. While the theory makes sense, and seems to appear in many classroom experiences, the research doesn’t support this theory.

-Ends-

The Learning Pyramid
By Dr. Lieb Liebenberg, CEO at ITSI

The Learning Pyramid (also known as the Learning Cone or the Cone of Experience) is another outdated and questionable theory which still holds considerable attention within the education domain. The model attempts to highlight the different methods of teaching and how well these work with student retention rates. On the surface, this again looks like a great
way to categorise learning and create content that best engages a student based on this.

However, the first issue with this model is that it does not leave room for modern theories such as differentiation. It is very much a ‘one size fits all’ approach, suggesting that every student would have optimal retention rates if this model was implemented in the classroom. It also suggests that teachers should adapt the classroom to become more collaborative and group-focused, but without any background knowledge, it can be impossible for a child to effectively learn in a group setting and discuss with their classmates.

As with learning styles, the most important factor that devalues the learning pyramid is the lack of substantial empirical research that supports it. As seen from the diagram above, the National Training Laboratories (NTL) claims that the learning pyramid was something that they created. However, when their reports are read, the NTL cannot find the suitable research that supports this. Without this research, teachers and educators should approach the learning model cautiously, knowing that it may actually have negative impacts on the classroom.

While we agree that it is important for these historical methods of teaching to be acknowledged, it is important to ensure that there is room for different approaches to learning to be used within the classroom at points when it is most practical.

-ENDS-

‘If you can Google it, why study it?’
By Dr. Lieb Liebenberg, CEO at ITSI

A more recent concept in education is the idea due to the infiltration of technology both in and outside of the classroom, which has made information extremely, and possibly overly, accessible to students, we don’t need to teach students actual content anymore. While information is certainly at students’ fingertips, does this really mean that foundational knowledge on a subject, should be abandoned in the classroom?

In recent years, the key skills that leaders would like educators to prioritise in their teaching has expanded from those we have thought of as classic (character, creativity and collaboration) to include things like computational thinking and
digital citizenship. Just because students may be able to Google information doesn’t mean we should encourage full independent learning with no factual instruction. If students have a poor foundational knowledge, they will not be able to develop into the critical thought leaders we need to forge the way as part of the fourth industrial revolution.

Although technology has made information and resources easier to access, this does not mean that students are innately able to process and utilise this knowledge without traditional learning methods. Foundational knowledge is key to allow students to explore and add to what they have already learned in the classroom. Also, it seems redundant to suggest that key skills such as creativity and collaboration should overrule the importance of foundational knowledge. Without that understanding, how can children be expected to effectively analyse and collaborate? If we wish to build these key skills in our students, then we first need children to be able to understand the purpose of the task and what the information really means.

Educational trends are constantly changing; allowing these ‘education myths’ to persist despite a lack of empirical research will no doubt be counterproductive. It is now clear that adapting the classroom for different modes of learning is important, but we must pay more attention to the research neuroscience is providing us before implementing a model that could well be a myth. Directing our attention to key theories such as differentiation and blended learning can help students to build key skills for the future as well as improve the education system as a whole.

-Ends-
Testimonials

“With ITSI, their priority is ensuring that engaged learning is happening, and they have delivered on every promise they have made. The system is stable, user-friendly and it boasts a rich feature set which have only just begun to explore.”

“I recommend ITSI to any educational institution. It is so important to see this product as more than simply providing ‘textbooks behind glass’; it is a way to distribute content, interact with students and provide them with more opportunities to go far deeper than any words printed on a page ever could.”

**Shaun Kirk, Director of Learning Commons and eLearning Co-Ordinator at Bridge House, South Africa**

“This partnership with ITSI has many benefits. These include a centralised location of notes for pupils, lighter school bags, more interesting textbooks and electronic reminders of assessments or assignments that are due. ITSI assist on a weekly basis with staff, helping them to use the ITSI portal and to engage ever more fully with the reality of e-learning.”

**Fr Grant James C.O., Head of School at St. Dominic’s Priory School, South Africa**

“I am no longer a person standing in front of the classroom and giving them a whole lot of information. The technology of ITSI has really allowed my students to make the subject alive where they create their own content and I facilitate learning.”

**Carla van der Walt, Teacher at Maragon Olympus Private School, South Africa**

“With this wonderful technology you can work without paper – you can push content to their tablets, I can project it onto my screen and you can have a completely interactive lesson. It has adapted to that point where the learners are excited, they open their tablets and involve themselves in the lesson.”

**Ruan Rautenbach, Information Manager at Midstream College, South Africa**