E-safety: evaluation of key stage 3 materials for initial teacher education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the work and findings from a four month research project undertaken by academics from leading initial teacher training institutes in England [1].

The research was commissioned by Childnet International [2] to identify if and how e-safety education could be incorporated into the current initial teacher education. 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.

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 disciplines 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.

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.

1: These were University of Brighton, Canterbury Christ Church University, Middlesex University, and the University of Southampton
2: Childnet international is a non-profit organisation with the mission to "help make the internet a great and safe place for children" .
See **www.childnet-int.org**

The research methodology proved successful and 283 trainees responded online to the face-to-face presentation, with a quarter of responses being made out-of-hours; 70 responses were from ICT trainees. 214 trainees provided their personal email addresses so that they could receive copies of the report. There were 539 separate requests for online materials during the study period. The focus was to determine the needs of ICT trainees. There is no clear distinction in the depth of responses between ICT and non-ICT trainees, both groups showing an interest and desire to be better informed.

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. The full findings and recommendations are summarised in this report. (See page 4-6). They 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 was 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 (often at Masters level).

KEY FINDINGS

The following statements are derived directly from the experiences of the expert evaluation of the materials, the planning and implementation of the e-safety activities and the responses of the trainees.

1. E-safety is embedded within the teaching standards requirements for initial teacher education through the "statutory and non-statutory curricula frameworks" including the National Curriculum, the Children's Act, etc.

2. ICT trainees have no greater requirement to be aware of e-safety (as a result of the teaching standards) than other trainees.

3. The National Curriculum for ICT, the Key Stage 3 Strategy for ICT Capability and the Sample Teaching Units make no direct reference to e-safety.

4. There is no correlation between perceived e-safety need and subject specialism. ICT trainees are not a special case.

ICT trainees have the same issues, breadth of concerns and information needs as other trainees. (They showed more awareness of Bluetooth™ and pornography issues).

ICT trainees expressing an opinion said they thought e-safety was the domain of ICT as well as other areas such as personal, social, health and citizenship education.

5. There are a number of models of implementing e-safety training including face-to-face delivery and accessing information online.

6. Face-to-face models show a higher uptake and are more highly valued by trainees.

7. Trainee teachers learn the content of new materials by considering how they would teach it.

8. There is a high level of trainee engagement and response when tuition is in smaller groups.

9. There is a need to provide compensation/remediation for absenteeism.

10. There is a poor response by some trainees associated with compulsion, expectation and pressures of work; therefore, e-safety experience needs to be structurally and pedagogically embedded.

11. Trainee responses to the glossary of terms were very positive (page 23).

12. The majority of trainees felt that responsibility for e-safety should lie with all school staff. Although a significant number felt that there should be a named teacher with overall responsibility (pages 17 and 22).

13. Trainees found the resources easy to use. Reflects the standards for ITT and the fact that trainers no longer need to focus on ICT skills (page 9).

14. Trainees were creative and thoughtful in the links they made between their subject specialism and e-safety (page 16).

15. Overall, the trainees felt that the resources were fine in terms of nature and content. The suggestions that trainees made were centred around developing activities to get the most out of the resources (page 22).

16. A significant minority of trainees had received no input from their placement schools on aspects of e-safety (page 26).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the report are based upon the pragmatics of what is likely to work in the "real world" of initial teacher education and upon the value judgements made about the quality and efficacy of the materials available to support the trainers and trainees.
They are:

To provide a portal to link to a range of resources to support the following groups of teachers:

• trainees to help increase knowledge of the e-safety issues; and
• trainees to provide them with materials to use with pupils.
• tutors to trainees to provide them with materials to help deliver e-safety within the ITT curriculum
• practising teachers to provide them with a place to find out about e-safety training and internet safety resources from a number of organisations.

The final recommendation was to:

• incorporate e-safety into the revision of the ICT sample teaching units and into the whole-school strands.