

## Who is Stephen Heppell?

### Can ICT win the World Cup for England?

I am often described as the person to blame for adding the "C" into the middle of IT. It's very likely true and it rather ruined a lot of cute posters in the style of "Let's get down to IT" and similar. But I stand by the change. Information and Technology were simply not enough for learning in the 20th century, let alone the 21st. The "C" allowed everyone to focus a little better on Communication, and on the way that new technology was transforming it, as we have now seen everywhere from SMS and MSN to podcasting and blogs. Rather encouragingly others have now taken up the torch and are valuing community, collaboration and creativity as "C" words too. As we look at ICT in the 21st century it is clear that shared community spaces and inter-group communications are a massive part of what excites young people as we have seen with mySpace, YouTube, Flickr, Wikipedia, Bebo and the like. YouTube is not just a place where 15 million people go to watch video, it's a place where huge numbers go to contribute and share too. Check out the BTEC final assessments posted there for example. Content isn't king any more, but community might just be sovereign. This is no surprise is it?

Yet UK education has a long history of valuing individual endeavour. Collaboration and communication - whether with parents over coursework, or with peers sharing homework assignments - is all too often classed as "cheating". The annual ritual of exam grades being opened on TV focuses on individuals. Unsurprisingly, as a result of this obsession with the individual, our UK star performers are very rarely team players. Our star sportspersons, from Ellen MacArthur via Nigel Mansell back to Seb Coe, are typically individual stars. This jars with the 21st century. Our Prime Minister is nowadays criticised for being too "presidential" and not "collegiate" enough. Our football team, as we saw earlier this year, is rich with individual talent, but they don't seem to be able to come together as a team in the big events. We blamed their coach because the team failed to gel together. We should have blamed the curriculum.

ICT drives a coach and horses through the cult of individuality. And this sets up some interesting tensions. We have seen ICT being harnessed to drive individual's test scores upwards; the rich potential of the computer wasted on what has become appropriately branded as "drill and kill" as we chase the enhancement of individual scores. Oddly, having taking so much social activity out of the curriculum we then seem to demonise children for their anti-social behaviour. ASBOs? We should have slapped one on the curriculum.

But don't despair. Despite all this, we have still seen some stunning collaborations, between and within schools, across groups of engaged motivated learners, increasingly across national boundaries, powered by the extraordinary technology that the 21st century has given us. Personalisation gives us the opportunity to build on that technology to vary and version learning to the particular learning needs, cultures and contexts of our ambitious learners. Their needs include the need to work together, their cultures value community. Personalisation does NOT mean individualisation. Forward looking schools are already clear about that.

This all terrifies the exam-paper fundamentalists who, as we are beginning to see, chant their mantras and attack the evolving alternatives with a reactionary zeal. "Death to coursework" they cry, brandishing their shredders. But of course, it's already the 21st century and we can't turn off progress. Children have embraced the "C" words to build active communities of learners, to swap and exchange insights, to collaborate, communicate, create and challenge. They will neither tolerate having to power down to come to school, nor being locked back into the anti-social world of individualism. Together, our children have seized on the learning opportunities presented by ICT. It's time that the curriculum did the same, before those same children simply take their learning elsewhere.

Posted by: [Stephen Heppell](#)



Professor Stephen Heppell

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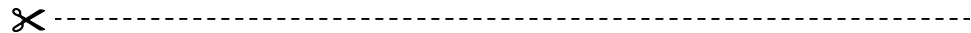
## What does 'Building Schools for the Future' really mean?

Parents are warmly invited to Northfleet School for Girls on  
**Monday 30 March 2009 at 7:30pm** in the main hall  
 for a presentation by

### Professor Stephen Heppell

Stephen is an international figure who has worked extensively with young people to find out what makes education excellent in the twenty first century.

Please confirm your attendance by returning the slip below to the School Office



*Please complete and return to the School Office by Monday 23 March 2009*

Northfleet School for Girls

**Monday 30 March 2009 at 7:30pm** in the main Hall  
 presentation by

### Professor Stephen Heppell

Student's Name: ..... Base Group: .....

I/we would like to attend the presentation (please indicate number of people)

Signed: ..... Date: .....

(Parent)