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Mikulas Gaussman is currently attending a school in the UK. He’s an average student from a fairly average family. At age of 12, he’s far from digitally illiterate. On the contrary, he interacts with technology on a daily if not hourly basis. Digital devices are common features in both his school and leisure life: at school he is obliged to take computing as this is part of the National Curriculum he must follow; at home he uses internet and online games such as Clash of the Clans.

Twenty years hence, we can envisage digital technologies continuing to be intertwined with daily life. Twenty years hence, various social, economic, and geo-political forces, and ongoing trends will shape the context that current 12 year olds might inhabit.

From a national economic perspective, there is a call to address an anticipated need for a work force capable to deal with the demands of a more technologically enhanced society. Recently, UK under-secretary for Education, Elizabeth Truss, voiced how curriculum reform initiatives will strengthen digital technologies and computing, along with other STEM subjects. These are seen as crucial to future economic success in an era of increasingly highly skilled workforces and global competition (speech accessed 31 October, 2013) [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/elizabeth-truss-speaks-about-curriculum-reform](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/elizabeth-truss-speaks-about-curriculum-reform) .

It has been suggested that growth industries will be deeply reliant on understanding of and use of technology. Genetic, Robotic, Information, and Nano-technologies. These GRIN Techs will demand both understanding and application of the technologies and theories upon which they are built.

From a European social perspective, Europeans are encouraged to develop their ‘skills and competences throughout [their] lives not just for personal fulfillment and [their] ability to actively engage in the society [they] live in but also for [their] ability to be successful in a constantly changing world of work’ <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf> (2007, accessed 31 Oct 2013).

While digital literacy and computing are posited as being key to individual and regional success, a number of other issues are posited as demanding attention but at a global level. Key among these global concerns are security, inequality, global sustainablility.

Given the forces shaping the future landscape, twenty years hence, what awaits Mikulas? Will Mikulas have been equipped with the skills and experiences enabling him to not merely survive but positively flower in a world, which will be ever more reliant on a person’s ability to understand and use digital technologies?

Key among the current initiatives that aim to equip students for the future world, is the move towards computing and digital literacy. English National Curriculum view computing as “equip[ping] pupils to use computational thinking and creativity to understand and change the world” ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), 2013).

Digital literacy is already a central theme within a number of different educational systems and societies (New Zealand, <http://www.iitp.org.nz/files/201001%20Digital%20Literacy%20Research%20Report.pdf> ) and representing different concerns within a particular society (NZ report. The European Union has been promoting life-long learning since XXXX and lists digital competence as one of the eight core competences that feed into and support life-long learning XXXX. Digital competence or more broadly Digital Literacy (DL), is also acknowledged by UNESCO as a way to ‘improv[ing] employability because it is a gate skill, demanded by many employers when they first evaluate a job application. It also works as a catalyst because it enables the acquisition of other important life skills’ <http://iite.unesco.org/publications/3214688/> .

Digital literacy is therefore an enabler. It provides a skill set for a person equipped with the digital skill set to navigate through, draw upon, evaluate digital environments for a given purpose. Whether this be accessing resources or using digital technologies to remix content for a particular audience, DL can be seen as positively contributing towards self-directed learning and heutagogical practice (Hase and Kenyon, 2000 CHECK!!!).

Digital literacy must rest at the heart of any discussion of a digital future. It encompasses the skill set to deal with geographic, social, political, cultural diversity with regard to the (non-)use of technologies in future work and learning contexts. This diverse landscape might be thought of as the earth’s seas and oceans. In an ever shifting and evolving global society, being fully digitally literate increases a citizen’s chances to situate themself in and navigate through the known/unchartered/tidal seas of a digital world.

Returning to a national level position, Hague and Payton state that “digital literacy furnishes children and young people with the skills, knowledge and understanding that will help them to take a full and active part in social, cultural, economic, civic and intellectual life now and in the future” (Hague and Payton, 2010). It is my concern, however, that current K-12 education in UK may not sufficiently equip youth for the realities of a future world in which digital literacy can be seen as essential.

A comparison of a number of digital literacy curriculums and guidelines reveal that they begin to address the three broad functional areas of operational, critical, and creative digital competences (XXXX). Key among these are objectives of to:

* 1.
* 2.
* 3.
* 4.

Beyond compulsory education, frameworks and guidelines are beginning to emerge that support adult education (NZ ref XXXX), Further and Higher Education (REF TO SHEFFIELDs work). In these frameworks we see a review and extension of the functional competences (XXXX).

Areas of concern

However there are number of potential gaps/discrepancies that may deserve closer attention by more us.

Staffing

It has been acknowledged (XXXX) that one block to successful development of digital literacy across the board is that of the knowledge of those charged with fostering digital literacy. Given that digital literacy is such a recent development in curricula, and the fact that we are all ‘learning on the job’, this is hardly surprising. Of course, transition is slow. Additionally, practical initiatives put forward such as those of Hague and Payton (2010) need to appeal to the widest audience.

Disruptive innovations

Degrees and understanding of openness

Important issues not considered

What important debate is neglected?

Hase, S. & Kenyon, C. (2000). From Andragogy to Heutagogy. ultiBASE, 5(3). http://ultibase.rmit.edu.au/Articles/dec00/hase1.pdf