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HOT LIST

THE WHO'S WHO IN EDUCATION 2015



**RISE OF THE
MACHINES**
A NEW ERA OF LMS

THE BIG INTERVIEW
DR IAN LAMBERT,
THE SCOTS COLLEGE

**HITTING THE
RIGHT NOTE**
MUSIC EDUCATION

GAMIFICATION

GAME OF LIFE

'Gamification' is turning the process of learning into a game, but do e-learning tools in the classroom actually help your school perform better and put your students ahead in the game of life?

CEO OF LiteracyPlanet Adam McArthur is an eyewitness to the misfortune that can befall students failing to build solid literacy foundations.

"For us as a business, in primary school education we are really making sure that kids are getting the building blocks right," McArthur says. "The biggest challenge is making that engaging, and we find those who have missed some of those building blocks struggle to catch up in high school."

LiteracyPlanet offers curriculum-aligned online literacy education for pre-K to Year 9 students in a 'gamified' learning environment for use at school or at home. It aims to be fun and motivating while delivering a boost to results.

However, the platform is just one of a growing host of new learning tools, all of

which offer schools the promise of making use of increasingly ubiquitous technology to give teachers and students an edge.

The question is, can teachers use these online tools practically and effectively in schools, given the limited time and resources they have available?

More importantly, will the trend towards gamification in schools actually put students ahead in that much more important game – life?

MAPPING THE MARKET

For many schools and teachers, their first interaction with gamified learning would have been in the use of 3P Learning's highly popular Mathletics platform.

Now used in over 50% of schools in Australia, the platform was a pioneer in

bringing online learning tools into the classroom using new technology.

3P Learning listed on the ASX last year and is about to celebrate its 10th anniversary. Australian CEO Andrew Smith says the group continues to benefit from a strong brand following and loyalty among schools.

"Schools tend to see us as a provider they trust, having worked with us over a period of time. They often make use of a range of products across our suite."

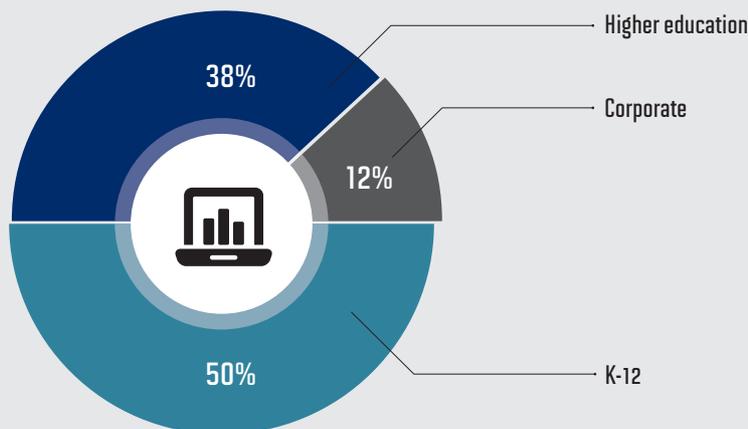
3P Learning has experienced early success with its new science tool, IntoScience, for Years 7, 8 and 9, in addition to continued growth in Reading Eggs, Spellodrome and its Mathletics products. The company issues about 2.3 million licences locally, with Mathletics alone accounting for 1.5 million.

However, 3P Learning is now just one provider of many. An influx of local and overseas vendors and developers – from small tech start-ups to large established players like Microsoft and tertiary institutions – is turning the local landscape into an increasingly complex one for schools to navigate.

The offerings differ. Some providers like 3P Learning, LiteracyPlanet, Ideal Resources and Studyladder provide genuine gamified learning tools, which are said to engage students in new ways to enhance learning progress and results.

However, there are many online learning providers – including textbook publishers – that are largely repackaging content in traditional styles so it can be digitally accessed at home or on platforms like classroom smartboards.

E-LEARNING GROWTH BY SECTOR, 2012-17



Sources: GSV Advisors, Docebo



“We are trying to open teachers’ eyes to the fact that resources like ours can actually save time rather than add to the burden” Andrew Smith, 3P Learning

Most technology pundits predict that gamification will woo progressive educators in future, and interim-step ‘shovelware’ – or repackaged content – may be replaced in time as schools move to embrace a ‘flipped classroom’ dynamic.

If there is one certainty, it is that the e-learning universe is set to expand. A global report from corporate LMS provider Docebo has predicted 50% growth worldwide in the

K-12 e-learning market by 2017, compared with 2012 levels.

“The online K-12 education industry is a fast-moving industry and the rate of technological change and competition is increasing,” 3P Learning told its ASX investors in an update earlier this year.

“The risk associated with the market requires management to continually focus on innovation and change to keep pace

THE CODE BREAKERS



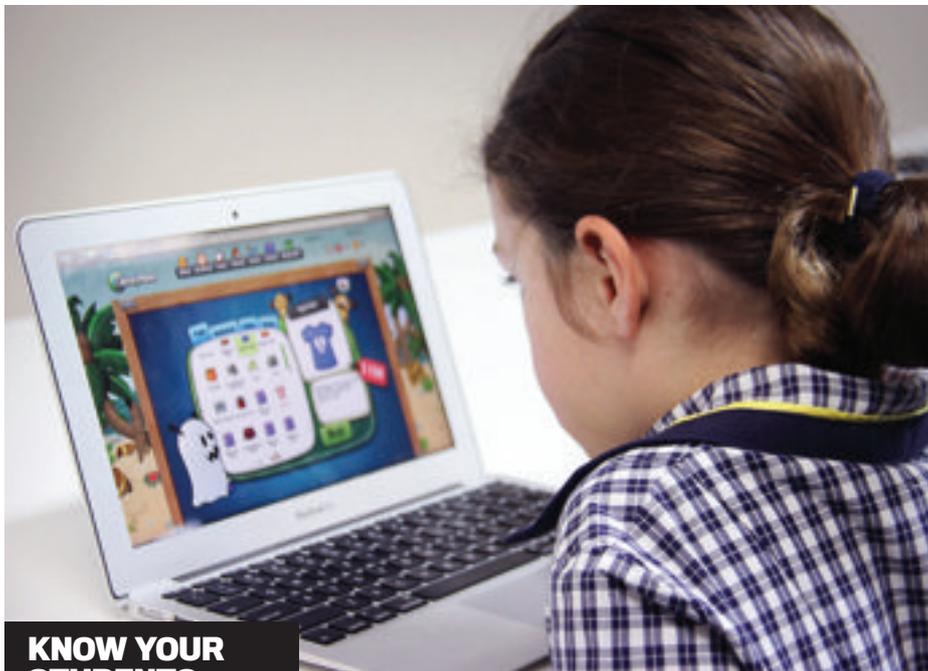
Do you know how to code? If not, your students may already be a step ahead. Microsoft is reaching out directly to students with hardware like the Xbox and PCs to teach them how to code through gamified learning initiatives Kodu and Project Spark. As it turns out, gaming may not be such a waste of time.

with competitors and new entrants to the market.”

GAINING THE ADVANTAGE

Smith knows exactly what it means to face the day-to-day pressures of teaching a class full of students. Having spent 20 years teaching himself, he keeps his products

GAMIFICATION



KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

THE FOUR GAMER TYPES IN YOUR CLASSROOM



Explorers



Competitors



Achievers



Socialisers

use its products, the indication so far is simple: two activities per week per child.

E-learning application providers say there are other advantages for students and schools that incorporate gamification into their classrooms:

1 ENGAGEMENT AND REWARD

Four gamer types sit in your classrooms, according to the gamer psychology Bartle Test: Explorers, Competitors, Achievers and Socialisers. Gamified learning applications tap these inbuilt traits to replace didactic learning with a fun and motivational experience for students.

“One of the big day-to-day challenges for teachers is getting kids engaged; gamification can do that really well,” says LiteracyPlanet’s Adam McArthur.

While students can compete against their classmates, friends and nationally to earn



“One of the big day-to-day challenges for teachers is getting kids engaged; gamification can do that really well”

Adam McArthur, LiteracyPlanet

focused on what teachers want. One of those key drivers is performance. In a results-driven environment measured by NAPLAN and other tests, do these tools make a difference?

The tentative answer is yes. Though research will continue to emerge, a study conducted by the Australian Catholic University’s Dr Tony Stokes for 3P Learning found that schools using Mathletics were able to boost their NAPLAN score by up to 9%, based on data available between 2008 and 2012.

LiteracyPlanet, meanwhile, estimates that its own online literacy tools boost NAPLAN literacy scores in participating schools by 5–10%.

While Smith says 3P Learning is planning further detailed analysis of pedagogy to gain more insight into how successful schools

points or even certificates at school assemblies – very appealing to Competitors and Achievers – they can also explore information through enquiry-based learning tools like 3P’s IntoScience, while having fun along the way.

2 TIME, MONEY AND DATA

E-learning providers say that, rather than adding work to a teacher’s already busy day, curriculum-based games can actually help lighten their workload.

“We are trying to open teachers’ eyes to the fact that resources like ours can actually save time rather than add to the burden,” Smith says. “The biggest time-saver is the data that e-learning resources can gather and provide.”

Data on e-learning platforms can be accessed and analysed to keep teachers up to

date with students' progress and give students instant feedback.

"Students have access to their progress, immediate feedback and support with their mistakes, and there is a history of previous work. It's an up-to-the-second picture of

Term 1, for example, and it might not be revisited until Term 4," Smith explains.

"That's a gap for students for the long term, and may remain a problem forever if it impacts their interaction with maths in the future. If kids are using Mathletics regularly



"The key that I have seen is to stay truly focused on the education outcome that you are trying to achieve" Ray Fleming, Microsoft

where they've come from and what they have to do next," McArthur says.

This can have cost-saving benefits for cash-strapped schools, by taking some of the legwork out of administrative tasks.

"A lot more when we talk to schools we are not only showing the educational benefits but how they can save money in the long term," says McArthur. "Teachers can cut out the marking and recording and some of those administration elements, which are a significant cost to schools."

3 COLLABORATION AND SOCIALISING

Using gamified tools in schools marks progress towards what K-12 learning specialists argue is probably the future of education: the 'flipped classroom'.

Students can pursue and unlock their own learning in gamified environments and have experienced teachers present in class as guides and facilitators. At the same time, classes are used for group collaboration and social tasks, where online tools can provide valuable focal points for group activities.

Parents can also be brought into the process by having access to progress data but also through helping children at home with their homework.

4 FILLING IN THE GAPS

As both LiteracyPlanet and 3P Learning argue, regular use of e-learning tools helps students fill gaps in their learning to ensure they don't fall behind. "You can have a situation where a student misses algebra in Week 3 of

– for example, two activities per week per child – we are helping to ensure that there are no gaps in their learning," he says.

Providers also say curriculum-aligned programs, rather than ad hoc use of digital content or even Google searches, is better at filling those gaps.

TAKING THE CHALLENGE

Many schools have been slow to adopt new e-learning, for many reasons.

"The biggest challenge is time, and often it is speciality. Teachers are under so much pressure to teach content in such a short space of time," Smith says. "E-learning resources or introducing something that is slightly different presents enormous challenges. Teachers looking to use new resources or ways of learning need to know they add value not a burden to their load."

Available resources for computing devices can also be scarce.

"In certain sectors it is well accepted students are using computing devices in the classroom; often the biggest barrier is access to those devices," McArthur says. "A lot of independent schools have gone down the path of forcing parents to buy devices, while other schools have computer labs. What we are seeing is more active parents and P&C committees doing fundraising activities, and more schools reserve more budget for online tools," he says.

SIMPLY WINNING

Schools convinced of the benefits of gamification may still be confused by the

HOW ARE SCHOOLS USING GAMIFICATION?

There's no single way to win using new curriculum-based e-learning games, but here are a few ideas that could propel your students ahead of the rest:

-  Use these programs as your main classroom resource: some teachers actually do, and their NAPLAN results seem to indicate it works.
-  Use them as supplementary resources in group settings, rotating groups through traditional activities with a 'fun' e-learning payoff.
-  Use them as the focal point of an individual computer lab session.
-  Flip your classroom by allowing students to learn and study at home, and then come back to school for questions and reinforcement. Get traditional and set some tasks as homework to reinforce a lesson.
-  Give extra help to children with learning difficulties by spending more time in the classroom with them and the available e-learning tools.
-  Get parents involved by inviting them to 'game' with their kids.
-  Don't forget the magic formula: two activities per child per week. This may help boost your school's NAPLAN score by up to 9%.

array of options that are being made available to them.

With a range of vendors, platforms and approaches, choice itself can lead to stalling and confusion. The trick, say the experts, is to keep it simple.

"The key that I have seen is to stay truly focused on the education outcome that you are trying to achieve," says Microsoft's education head, Ray Fleming.

"It is easy to get seduced into the latest buzzword, but if you stay true to that focus, you can start to look at the choices that will help you achieve it." 