

2019

MOVING FORWARD

TECH IMPACT

EARLY LEARNING CENTRE REPORT | AUSTRALIAN CHILD CARE 2019



TECHNOLOGY IMPACT

I think there is a lot more right about education than there is wrong however, change needs to happen to the way we engage in learning. Education is lifelong, in that people can't simply go to school for 12 years and stop learning. People need to embrace education as a lifelong process, as jobs are always being replaced by someone or something, forcing people to change.

If you want to change education, it's important to recognise what sort of system it is. Don't mistake me; I'm not suggesting that all schools are terrible or that the whole system is a mess. Of course not. Public education has benefited millions of people in all sorts of ways, including me. I only have the life I've had as a result of the free public education I received when I was growing up. Education opened my mind to the world around me and gave me the foundations on which I've created my life.

For countless others, education has been the path to personal fulfillment or the route out of poverty and disadvantage. Numerous people have succeeded in the system and done well by it. It would be ridiculous to suggest otherwise. But far too many have not benefited as much as they should have from the long years of education. The success of those who do well in the system comes at a high price for the many who do not. As the standards movement gathers pace, even more students are paying the price of failure. Too often, those who are succeeding are doing so in spite of the dominant culture of education, not because of it. So what can we do? Whether you're a student, an educator, a parent, an administrator, or a policymaker — if you're involved in education in any way — you can be part of the change. To do that, you need three forms of understanding: a critique of the way things are, a vision of how they should be, and a theory of change for how to move from one to the other. Too many people complain about education and do nothing. We are not going to do that.

Over the years that I have been working in education, I've been pushing for more balanced, individualised and creative approaches to education. In the last ten years especially, I hear people everywhere saying how exasperated they are by the deadening effects of testing and standardisation on them, their children, and their friends. Often they feel helpless and say there's nothing they can do to change education. Some people tell me they enjoy my talks online but

are frustrated that I don't say what they can do to change the system. I'm often asked the same questions: What's going wrong in education and why? If you could reinvent education, what would it look like? Would you have schools? Would there be different types? What would go on in them? Would everyone have to go, and how old would they have to be? Would there be tests? And if you say I can make a difference in education, where do I begin?

In the last forty years, the population of the world has doubled from less than three billion to more than seven billion. We are the largest population of human beings ever to be on Earth at the same time and the numbers are rising rapidly. At the same time, digital technologies are transforming how we all work, play, think, feel, and relate to each other. That revolution has barely begun. The old systems of education were not designed with this world in mind. Improving them by raising conventional standards will not meet the challenges we now face.

The system is neither monolithic nor unchanging, which is why you can do something about it. It has many faces, many intersecting interests, and many potential points of innovation. Knowing this helps to explain why and how you can change it. The revolution I'm advocating is based on different principles from those of the standards movement. It is based on a belief in the value of the individual, the right to self-determination, our potential to evolve and live a fulfilled life, and the importance of civic responsibility and respect for others. As I see it, the aims of education are to enable students to understand the world around them and the talents within them, so that they can become fulfilled individuals and active, compassionate citizens.

If you're involved in education in any way you have three options: you can make changes within the system, you can press for changes to the system, or you can take initiatives outside the system. Systems as a whole are



capable of changing too, and in many ways they already are. The more innovation there is within them, the more likely they are to evolve as a whole.

Education doesn't happen in the committee rooms of the legislatures or in the rhetoric of politicians. It's what goes on between learners and teachers in actual schools. If you're a teacher, for your students you are the system. If you're a school principal, for your community you are the system. If you're a policymaker, for the schools you control you are the system.

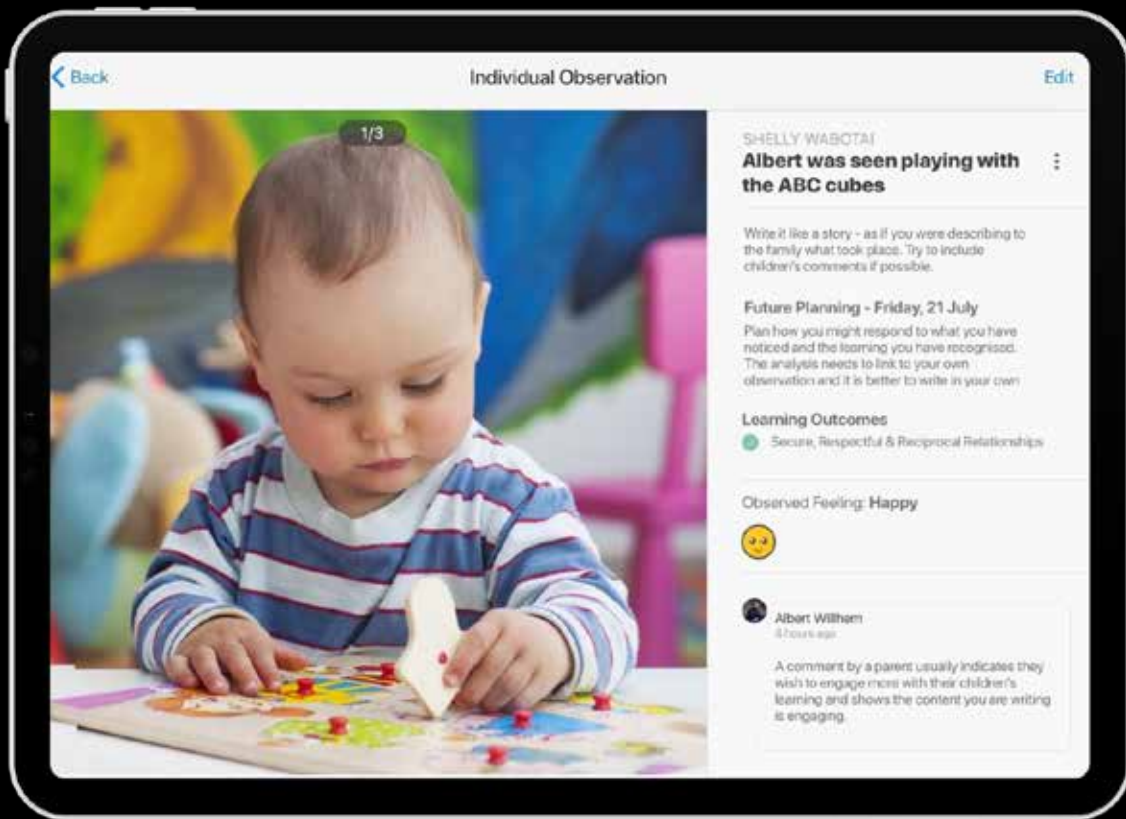
So let's make the system great.



**More participants mean more data.
And more meaningful results.**

- Mark Woodland

TECHNOLOGY IMPACT



Technology is providing a way for learning models to become increasingly personalised.

43%

Of services using software are 'Exceeding' the National Quality Standard.

Approximately 37% of LDC services were not using any Programming & Planning (P&P) software, and these services performed worse across nearly all Performance Indicators.

There was a considerable difference in ADR, with those that use P&P software reporting an ADR of \$107 vs. an ADR of \$97 for those that didn't use P&P software. lower annual costs (10% variance).

37%

Of services are not using Programming & Planning software platforms

Occupancy was comparable, resulting in those that use P&P software reporting \$93,147 higher annual revenue.

There was also a notable difference in staffing with those that use P&P software reporting \$95,171 lower annual staff costs (10% variance).

TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

In order for technology to function successfully in a service, Xplor's CEO, Mark Woodland, says that it needs to be in touch with educators and their needs. "It's important that we listen to educators and administrators to determine the ways technology can assist them best."

We live in a world where nearly everything is 'tech.' As parents, we are glued to our mobile phones from morning to night - gaining knowledge through social media and websites. We download apps to learn new languages and watch YouTube videos to learn how to play musical instruments.

Yet, when it comes to learning in a child care environment, we've barely scratched the surface of what's possible; many services still require parents to sign in and out on a piece of paper or send invoices by printing them out and putting them in a backpack. We lecture at children about the dangers of technology as they sit passively, without showing them the benefits. I'm encouraged by the innovative approaches I've seen some services take, as they adopt more

technology in the room and I think that will only accelerate as they learn and gain access to new and helpful tools.

Of course, what technology looks like in ten years may change pretty dramatically. Innovation in AI, for instance, is happening at a rapid pace. While I don't think AI tutors and teaching assistants will ever replace teachers, I do think that machine learning algorithms will help educators on non-priority tasks - like administration tasks, marking standardized tests, taking attendance - so educators can focus on more 1-on-1 time with children and on the more thoughtful activities only a human can do, like forming arguments, writing critically, and initiating more exciting and compelling discussions.

HOW TO USE TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

After years working alongside educators, we've seen — and research has shown — that creative thinking leads to deeper child engagement. When children are more engaged, they take more ownership of their learning. Creative skills help children become better problem solvers, communicators and collaborators. They explore more and experiment more. They tell richer stories and find their own unique voices. They stretch their imaginations and make connections they might not otherwise make — and they carry these skills through everything they do in school. And beyond.

VIDEOS

Movies are a great way to tell stories. Documenting and sharing learning stories helps children construct meaning from their experiences. Apps like the camera help you and your children produce an imaginative, narrative, and inspiring videos that document all types of learning experiences and are a great way to capture a Running Records.

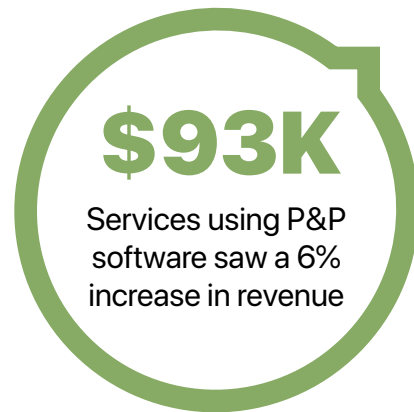
When documenting narratives, it is important to include as much detail as possible about the context, such as what happened before the experience that is being documented, who was present and what happened afterwards. Careful observation also requires the use of specific language to describe children's actions. It is important to remember that narratives are not an end in themselves but 'tools for reflection', and as with all documentation, they need to be reflected on and shared with others to identify possible meanings. Using a video to do this allows parents and educators to re-watch the learning as it took place.

PHOTOS

Photos of a child or group of children can help tell a narrative or story about everyday events and behaviours, or unusual events and milestones in a child's understandings. An anecdotal observation should provide a clear, descriptive picture of the event or behaviour and the context, participants, actions and interactions. It is something that can be written when you are 'out of the action' and have time to reflect.

Photos are a great way to create Learning Stories. Photos can support children's everyday experiences, highlighting the 'significant points' of learning, rather than attempting to record minute details, and making 'feelings and interpretations visible'. The format has evolved since it was introduced in 2001, and Learning Stories now generally include digital photographs to support the narrative or are digital or video stories.

TECHNOLOGY IMPACT



Programming & Planning (P&P) Software can help in more ways than just efficiencies. According to respondents, the most commonly utilised P&P software was StoryPark and the fastest growing software in the last 3 months is Xplor.

Here's a look at how software can assist in each of the Quality Assessment areas:

Quality Assessment 1 - Educational Program and Practice

Software assists in making the education that your service provides more 'child-focused', by allowing child observations to be easily linked to government learning frameworks and also the child's individual learning journey. These observations can generally also link up with parent profiles keeping educators and services accountable to what they are teaching children and can then be used for future planning and the recording of learning journeys for children, which are stored safely on our cloud-based platform. Software platforms are generally designed to maximise the time an educator can spend with a child on the floor, by reducing the time it takes to complete administrative tasks, therefore improving the quality of a child's education.

Quality Assessment 2 - Children's Health and Safety

Children's health and safety can be actively monitored by parents and recorded by educators and administrators via specialised mobile apps (such as Xplor). Observations are typically time-stamped, dated and then saved in the cloud so that a permanent record is stored and is reproducible at any point in time. Children's allergies and health plans are also generally accessible within a click of a button so that all educators are aware of a child's specific learning and health requirements. Children's food, sunscreen, toilet, sleep and medical events throughout the day can also be recorded digitally throughout the day. This information is typically available to parents via a web platform, which allows for educator accountability and reduces the risk of neglect for any child in care.

Quality Assessment 3 - Physical Environment

Software assists services in being 'well-maintained' not only physically but in their online environments. Digital platforms can generally ensure services are government compliant through automating CCS enrolments, providing online and off-line support, as well as keeping records safely stored in the cloud (in case of audits).

Going digital also ensures services are environmentally responsible by not requiring hard copy enrolment records, parent communications, child attendance rolls or Complying Written Agreements to be printed.

Quality Assessment 4 - Staffing Arrangements

Software allows for the proper organisation and upkeep of educator rostering across rooms through automated staff ratios, which typically update according to children sign in and outs. This ensures that there is a constant live update of the number of educators required in a room on the playground app, which assists with educator cross-communication and ensures that children are properly cared for throughout the service. Those services utilising software for Programming & Planning saw the largest impact was seen on staff costs, with an average saving of 15% or \$95,171 per annum.

Quality Assessment 5 - Relationships with Children

Educators are able to use software to post observations of the children's learning and development throughout their day, providing a record of the child's learning journey, and making it easier for the educator to plan lessons into the future. The educator can also generally track a child's wellbeing, lodging sleep, food, sunscreen, toilet and health events throughout the day. Digital records also encourages educators to maintain a high standard of care for children, as all records are available for administrators and parents to check after hours.

Quality Assessment 6 - Collaborative Family Partnerships

Software allows for active participation from parents via visual and written media, as well as enabling parents to comment and like these observations. This helps parents discuss and interact with their children at home, ensuring that education is continued even after the child has left the service. This can assist in reinforcing the child's social and communication skills, as well as strengthen the parent, child and educator relationships.

Quality Assessment 7 - Governance and Leadership

Some software platforms are also an automated administrative system, designed to minimise tasks that typically take hours out of administrator working weeks (and weekends). Time is returned to administrators and educators, so they can be fully present on the floor and spend less time reporting, filing and documenting information for the service. Generally, these software programs also help in the management of tasks at the service, making it easy to roster, document and record information, improving and maintaining the consistent quality of care provided to children by educators.



We're here to help.

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