

EXPLORING NEW TECHNOLOGIES THROUGH PLAYFUL PEER-TO- PEER ENGAGEMENT IN INFORMAL LEARNING

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Technology in society

- Internet – 80% households but older people use less
- Ebooks – 12% older people
- Tablets – 7% older people
- Assistive technologies

Education to use new technologies

- Classic teacher instruction
- Lack of flexibility
- Focus on awards/certificates
- Too difficult
- Time consuming

New ways of thinking

- Self learning
- Peer to peer learning
- Unstructured play
- Discovery and experiential learning

Opt-in

- Lifelong learning
- Peer to peer approach
- Creative learning
- Emphasis on fun and playful approach

Introducing new technologies

- Digi lab
- Touch table problem solving games
- Interactive gaming
- Music composing programme and dance mats
- Tablet and handheld technologies
- Design laboratories – exploring the future
- Web based developments
- International exchanges

Evaluating experiences

- A semi-structured evaluation pro forma, developed by the project partners for use across the whole international project partnership
- Unstructured diaries which participants from England completed during the international exchanges
- Semi structured interviews with participants from England who took part in local workshops and/or international project workshops and exchanges.

Emergent themes

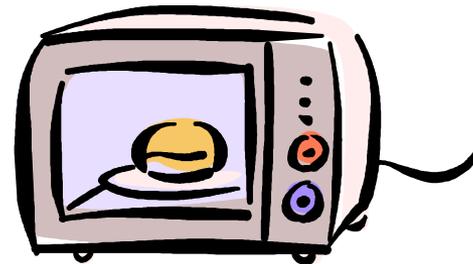
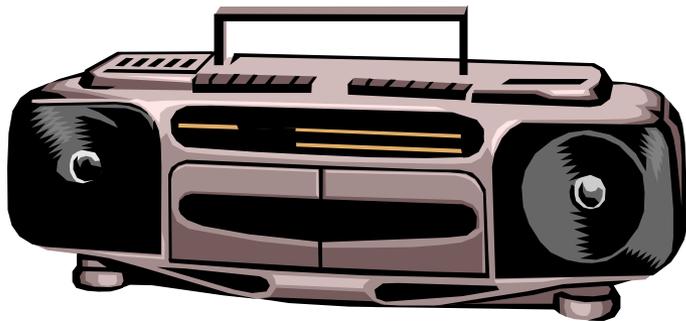
- The context of 'daily life' – with an emphasis on electrical and labour saving equipment, and technologies for personal safety and security;
- Lifelong experiences– including working lives and changes in technologies over time;
- Experiences and perceptions of technologies – whether positive, negative, or mixed, scepticism about technologies and using them in some sense to 'cheat';
- Communication with others – an incentive to use new technologies;
- Barriers to using technologies – especially costs;
- Ways of learning about technologies – including intergenerational and peer-supported learning.

Technologies in daily life

- Labour saving equipment and entertainment
- Influenced by personal preferences

'I've never been interested in personal Hi-Fis, Hi-Fi equipment and stuff like that, no. Microwave, we don't actually have a microwave, I mean I know how to use a microwave, I've used one in the past in various places. My house doesn't actually have a microwave'.

[James, aged 73]



Life-long experience with technologies

- Previous employment
- Work in the armed forces
- Early experiences
 - I wanted to work on aeroplanes and they said no, no, no, Radar so I thought oh it's the clean end of the aeroplane. No, no, no, ground Radar, big Radars and so in the early days of computers and certainly the last job I had in the Air Force which was the twelfth year I was there and I was coming out and I was working on satellite tracking systems and that was using paper tape and a 128K of memory and we had seven of these little units trying to tell it to turn, look where the rockets or missiles or whatever were being tested or looking for satellites and so on and they'd tear and you'd have to keep putting it inside.

Experiences and perceptions

Good, bad and indifferent

- Sat nav – good and bad, risk of loosing skills
- Internet – mixed blessing – easier to find things but takes up time
- Cheating – using a bread maker
- Sceptical – emails
- Not for everyone
 - ‘ older people should also be provided with the opportunities for ageing actively without using the computer’p16. (Hakkarainen 2012)

Communication with others

- SKYPE
- Facebook and Twitter



Barriers to use

- Speed of change

‘... I feel there should be a sort of basic, reasonable level PC and equipment. We don't want all this, unless you are working in a field, it really doesn't matter if it's high D or [...], it really doesn't matter, you just want to be able to use it and all this constant upgrading is more than pensioners can afford’. [Nancy, aged 78]

- Paying for upgrades

- Cost of technologies

- Expensive add-ons (hardware and software)

Learning styles

- Informal learning - supported by family and friends

‘I suppose finding your way round it really, because I’m trying to find my own way round it. I’ve got a friend who does help in some respects, but there’s some of it I just cannot do, because I haven’t got a clue how to do it’. [Maud, aged 78].
- Discovery learning - News items and articles
- Peer support

‘As a volunteer for the blind association, I find loneliness among the elderly especially those with disability, has grown into epidemic proportions. Modern technology could be the key to empowering them with independence. However, speaking to my fellow older learners from Germany and Scotland, I found that motivating and supporting the elderly to use modern technology is a challenge facing all societies. Local events and get-togethers sponsored by websites like Beppie's [friendship finder] could prove a conduit to finding an answer to this challenge’.

Unexpected outcomes

‘Just wanted to let you know I now have an i-Pad and am delighted with it. It is so wonderfully easy to have with one anywhere. So light and quick to use. I am still discovering all it can do. It is just so amazing this touch screen response in so many different programmes. I can see it will give me hours of delight and entertainment..... [I] have loaded books to read and photos to show. GREAT’.
(personal email April 2012)



Future considerations

Economic and wellbeing consequences for older people not engaging so need to consider issues of:

- Design
- Attitudes
- Match with needs
- Relevant and practical
- Knowledge of what is on offer
- Chance to 'have a go'
- Taking confidence from the past
- Recognising social and fun aspect to learning

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