Chapter 2
Policy, Pedagogy and Interactive Whiteboards: What Lessons Can be Learnt from Early Adoption in England?

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ABSTRACT
This paper will examine the factors that led to the rapid uptake of interactive whiteboards in English schools, the promise they represented to policy-makers and practitioners in those early stages, and how assumptions about their potential to transform pedagogy shaped early use. What can other countries learn from the English experience? Which approaches to IWB use have endured beyond the early stages of uptake? Which have remained unfulfilled, or in the light of experience now deserve to be revised? Where should research and development now focus if “transformative practice” with IWBs remains the policy goal? By reflecting on the history of IWBs in England, their emergence as a focus for policymakers’ interests and their use in classrooms, this paper will consider how far such technologies can foster pedagogic change.

INTRODUCTION
The uptake of IWBs has been particularly fast in the English school system, with the primary school sector leading the way. Other countries have turned to England to learn from our experience. Yet as early adopters, many English schools began using IWBs without being able to rely on established and detailed professional knowledge about what the technology’s role in enhancing pedagogy might really be and with little available research evidence to define what might constitute best practice. As Hennessy (2008, p. 1) comments, “until recently, assumptions about how [IWBs] have transformed teaching were not based on hard evidence”. Since the roll-out of the technology to English schools, the attention of the research community has rested on addressing this deficit. Some of this research has evaluated existing use and its potential impact...
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on performance. This work has largely been commissioned by government (see for example Higgins et al., 2005; Somekh et al., 2007; and the study which underpins this chapter, Moss et al., 2007). Other researchers have designed interventions that might enhance technology use in specific pedagogic contexts e.g. the primary classroom, or secondary Maths, Science or History (Kemeny, 2005; Hennessy & Deane, 2007; Miller & Glover, 2004). They include the active involvement of the research team in developing classroom practice with IWBs.

By contrast, this chapter focuses on the classroom practice of early adopters and analyses this as evidence of what both teachers and policymakers imagine the technology to be. The working assumption in what follows is that how the technology is imagined will influence how it is deployed. Moreover, in the current policy climate, imagination rather than evidence will often lead uptake, such is the policy premium on speed of change and innovation within education. There are pluses and minuses to this state of affairs. In one sense the need to imagine purpose and function is an intrinsic part of the development and uptake of any new technology (Noss & Pachler, 1999). Given the interest of policy makers in England in ensuring rapid roll-out, a period of extended exploration in which users developed their understanding of what the technology was good for as they tried it out was inevitable. But now that such a period has passed in England what conclusions can be drawn? Which questions have been settled and which remain? Can any of the uncertainties associated with early adoption now be resolved? In all these respects, what are the important lessons second-wave adopters could learn from this experience? This chapter will consider these questions in the light of a study of the introduction of IWBs to London secondary schools.

Technology use is here theorized as a social practice, intimately shaped by the social contexts in which such use occurs. In evaluating the introduction of IWBs to London schools the research design looked for variation in use according to teacher, curriculum subject area and school. We consider that the potential of the technology rests not with the affordance and resistance of the technology considered in the abstract, but with how that potential is both imagined and realized in particular settings (Jewitt, 2002; Moss, 2003). The research design allowed us to investigate these issues.

The analysis of early adoption which follows will explore how competing discourses about the benefits of the technology, the nature of pedagogic practice and the perceived affordance of the technology itself, all jostled to influence practice. There are four distinct communities involved: government and the agencies it has sponsored to foster uptake of new technologies in schools; the private sector which provides the relevant hard and software; the research community which has taken an interest in the potential role of ICT in school settings; and practitioners who use the technology in their classrooms. The chapter maps out similarities and differences in understandings of the technology associated with each of these groups and their respective influence upon classroom practice. In this way, the claims made for the technology and its value are tested against what happened as the technology rolled out in different settings. The discussion of IWBs will be treated as an example of the challenges policy-makers and educators face in modernizing education through the uptake of ICT.

METHODS

The paper draws on data collected as part of an evaluation of the introduction of IWBs to London secondary schools undertaken by a research team based at the Institute of Education, University of London, and commissioned by the Department for Education and Science (for the full report see Moss et al., 2007). The study took place between 2004 and 2006. It followed a decision by the then
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