

14 March 2006

Public Sector

## **Pupils demand more IT in schools and better trained teachers**

### **An IBI study demonstrates the need for action in the educational use of new media.**

BERLIN/MUNICH. Pupils demand that teachers are far more IT competent than presently, and want to see more extensive computer use in education that is not just limited to simplistic internet searches. A more sustained and extensive educational use of IT is dependent on an appropriate technical infrastructure that would allow every pupil to engage in networked learning, in this way helping to close “digital gaps” in society. Schools urgently need to implement a comprehensive “e-education” model in order to bring about a renewal of the culture of learning and teaching. These are some of the findings of the Cisco Systems commissioned research project “Pupils’ Voices: Information and Communication Technologies in Education” which was carried out by IBI (Institute for Education in the Information Society) at the University of Technology in Berlin.

Led by Prof. Dr Wilfried Hendricks, the IBI study interviewed pupils in ten schools (comprising gymnasia, “Hauptschulen” and comprehensive schools in five federal states) about their experiences of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education. Pupils were in particular questioned about their own use of the internet, their previous learning experiences involving computers, as well as their expectations in this regard, how confident they felt using ICTs, and how the teaching process and teacher roles were influenced by the introduction of digital media.

### **Networked education within reach**

Cisco Systems has for some time already worked on issues of IT in schools and has developed a comprehensive solution in the form of the “networked education” model. This model is intended to help develop a learning environment that matches the needs of a modern information society. It is not a purely technical model that only looks at hardware issues, but also explicitly addresses budgetary concerns, teacher training and the integration with official syllabi. The envisaged IT infrastructure would compare favourably with those in the business world, so that pupils learn in conditions that prepare them well for future

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careers. “In order to allow all children and adolescents to learn with computers, a new ICT supported educational environment must emerge,” explained Thomas Schmidt, Distribution Manager for communities, schools and churches at Cisco Systems Germany. “Computer skills are a non-negotiable key competency in the work place.”

### **Further IBI findings: high expectations of digital media**

The expectations of pupils with regard to educational computer use are consistently very high. They see more advantages than disadvantages in new media, but are also aware of the dangers of uncritical classroom use. Pupils are very interested in using new media educationally, and have many of their own ideas on how this could best be achieved. The best and most engaged pupils insist that they would not want to study anymore without utilising internet research and taking advantage of other online resources. For most pupils, networked learning is no longer a matter for the future; it is already current practice and informal learning appears to gain increased importance.

### **Focusing on the views of pupils**

The aim of the research was primarily to gather and evaluate authentic views and opinions of pupils, in contrast to many other previous studies that focused on teacher perspectives. With such a narrow empirical base, the research is however not representative and its results should rather be regarded as explorative and as an indication of trends. The results are however reliable and consistent with results of other comparable studies. Wilfried Hendricks notes in conclusion: “A more up-to-date culture of teaching and learning, in which pupils are able to control their own learning processes, requires new educational methodologies. These need to be implemented by competent teachers, and with the support of appropriate technologies. Digital media need to be integrated in such a way that the specific needs of pupils are targeted in an effective manner.”

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“Pupils’ Voices” is a British-German research partnership carried out at English and German schools. The research project was co-ordinated by Sue Brindley of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge (UK).

The report is also available at [www.ffpress.net](http://www.ffpress.net)

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