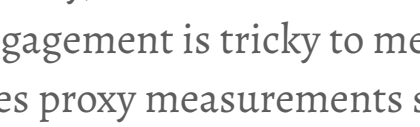


Software innovation: the key to success

Software firms' new developments could help education meet challenges in 2018, finds Sophie Beyer

Posted by Julian Owen | December 18, 2017 | Product news

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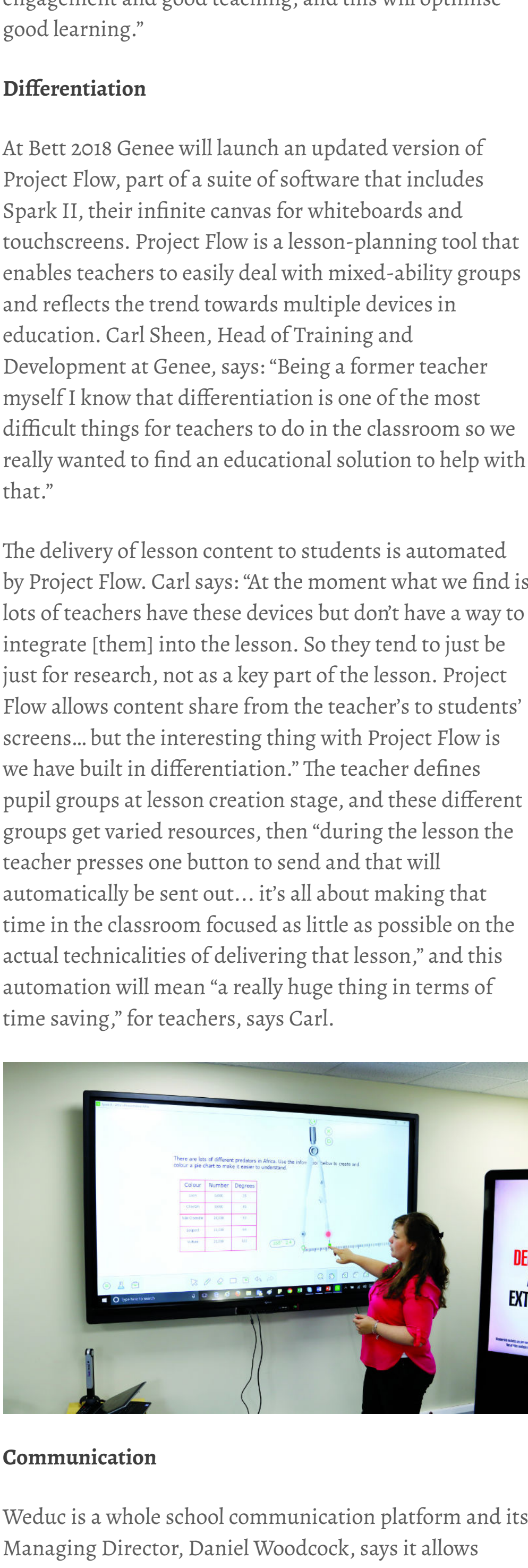
[Bett 2018](#) will reflect the growing interest in edtech, however, everyone working in or with education will recognise the financial restraints across all levels of the sector at the moment. New software developments though, using data and AI, aim to tackle educational challenges such as engagement, lesson planning and communication. This may enable schools, colleges and universities to work smarter and do more with less.

Use your data

If 2017 was all about gathering big data, 2018 involves harnessing it. StREAM, software developed by [Solutionpath](#), aims to use data in a different way to help higher education manage risk and solve strategic challenges. Richard Gascoigne, CTO and co-founder of Solutionpath worked with Nottingham Trent University initially, and now 11 HE institutions are signed up. The tool enables the university to unpack the learning journey, and break it down into measurable activity. Engagement is tricky to measure directly so StREAM uses proxy measurements such as high-frequency data sets of activities that students can do on a daily basis, such as library access, Wi-Fi, door access and PC login, as well as test scores. Richard says: "What we've got is a voracious metric, a standard of what engagement looks like. StREAM segments according to engagement, and makes it very easy to see if someone is not engaging."

With the widening participation agenda, sometimes the transition from FE to HE is more challenging. Students who engage well are more likely to be successful. Similar to nudge theory, StREAM enables a student to connect what they should do today via their app, to get a good result in three years' time. Richard says: "StREAM is used by both the student, tutor and institution to track levels of activity so any disengagement can be immediately addressed, and intervention can happen much earlier in the problem cycle, not just after tests when it may be too late."

Isn't all this monitoring a little creepy? No, says Richard, "It's about personalisation... There are 150,000 students who will not proceed each year. There is a moral responsibility to make sure students are successful, to identify cohorts that are harder to reach, and now [universities] are helping them better. We know that those students who use the dashboard get a better degree."



In 2018 universities will be able to become more innovative in how they construct their courses, Richard predicts, "If we've got an engagement score on a daily basis we can measure immediately and allow experiments with daily measurement so you can see if there is immediate improvement." With the learning landscape fragmenting, and the increase in the techniques such as flipped learning, education needs tools that allow insights from different data sources.

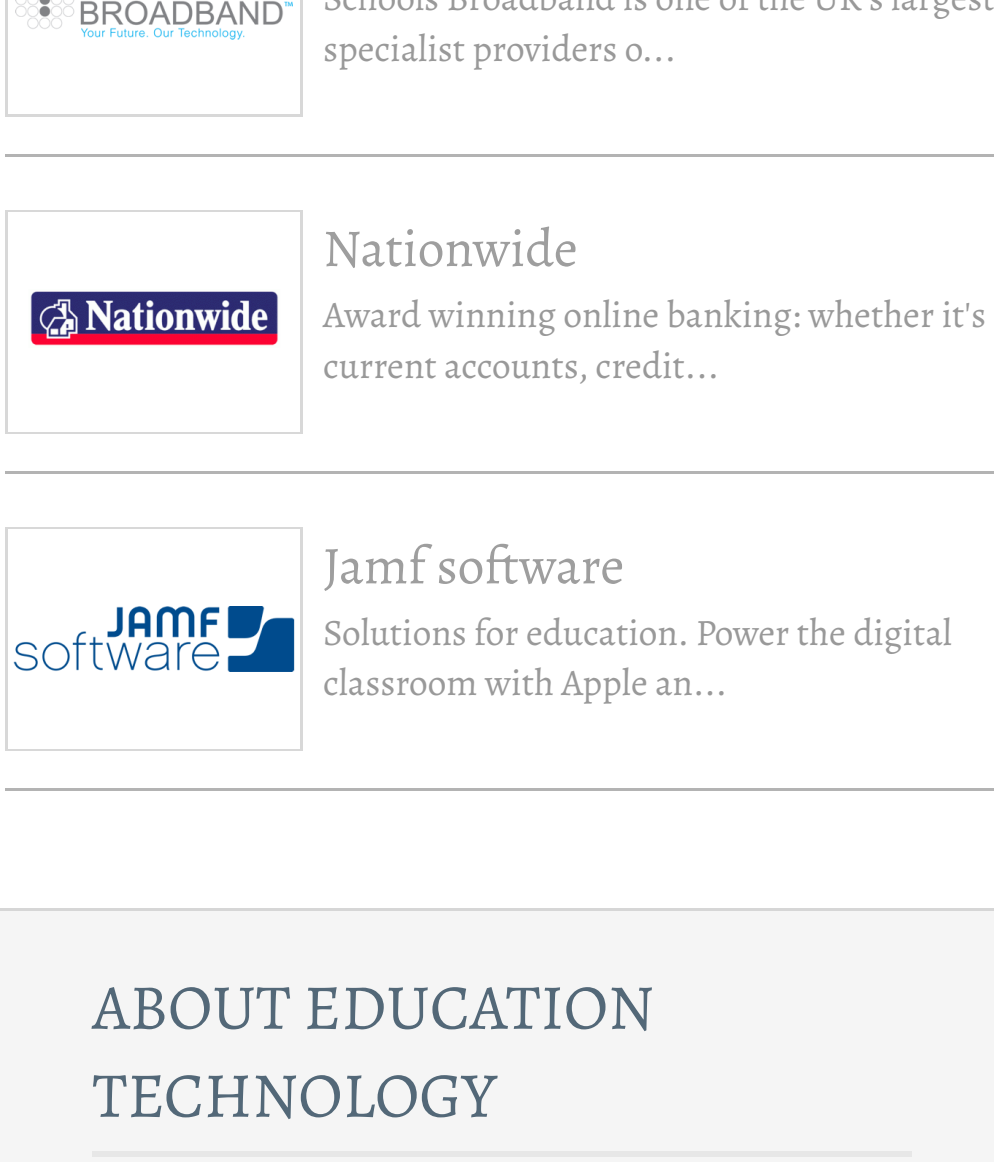
Analysing engagement using data is a key element of how Third Space Learning improves learning outcomes too. The company was founded by Tom Hooper in 2012 to create an online teaching model, and now it connects 6,000 UK primary school children a week to tutors in Sri Lanka and India for specialist maths tuition. People are the most important factor in education, states Tom Hooper, and the firm uses sophisticated AI software to analyse their tutors' interactions with pupils. Third Space Learning has amassed data that signifies better pupil engagement and uses that to improve tuition. The AI assists the tutors to be more effective, and it analyses patterns to identify good questions and interactions.

Tom says: "Teaching and learning interaction correlates and causes good student outcomes. We can analyse every session Third Space tutors deliver to identify student engagement and good teaching, and this will optimise good learning."

Differentiation

At Bett 2018 Genee will launch an updated version of Project Flow, part of a suite of software that includes Spark II, their infinite canvas for whiteboards and touchscreens. Project Flow is a lesson-planning tool that enables teachers to easily deal with mixed-ability groups and reflects the trend towards multiple devices in education. Carl Sheen, Head of Training and Development at Genee, says: "Being a former teacher myself I know that differentiation is one of the most difficult things for teachers to do in the classroom so we really wanted to find an educational solution to help with that."

The delivery of lesson content to students is automated by Project Flow. Carl says: "At the moment what we find is lots of teachers have these devices but don't have a way to integrate [them] into the lesson. So they tend to just be just for research, not as a key part of the lesson. Project Flow allows content share from the teacher's to students' screens... but the interesting thing with Project Flow is we have built in differentiation." The teacher defines pupil groups at lesson creation stage, and these different groups get varied resources, then "during the lesson the teacher presses one button to send and that will automatically be sent out... it's all about making that time in the classroom focused as little as possible on the actual technicalities of delivering that lesson," and this automation will mean "a really huge thing in terms of time saving," for teachers, says Carl.



Communication

Weduc is a whole school communication platform and its Managing Director, Daniel Woodcock, says it allows targeted communications to individual parents, reducing the 'white noise' of whole school communication, and having it all in one app. According to Daniel: "What we've done is created an app with elements of social media; it's safe and can capture the moments of children, targeted to their parents."

Weduc is launching some expanded functions at Bett 2018 to make teachers' lives a little easier. Teachers will be able to use Weduc to take the register, automating communication with parents and removing the need for manual input from paper registers by school staff. Daniel says Weduc will support educational challenges in the new year as it usually costs less than texting parents, and "it's unique as it allows you to communicate across trusts and multiple schools."

Videoscribe explainer software is Sparkol's flagship product, explains CMO Richard Jenkins, and now Sparkol is launching Storypix at Bett. It's very simple, he says: "Storypix is the ability to create video from a still photo and add personality to that video. You can zoom in to elements, just by touch, then record voice, hit render and share in any way. You can submit it as a school project, add text to the bottom, it can even be done on the fly... A teacher can take an image of something that has been done in class, then the teacher can voiceover parts of that image, send it out to the whole class, and that is retained forever."

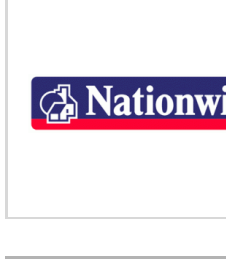
2018 could be the year software comes of age in education, with products aimed at increasing efficiency and engagement. As Richard Jenkins says of Sparkol's software: "Education is the fastest growing sector, there are lots of drivers coming from education. Why has it grown so fast? The behaviour of millennials in education, the medium of video or the digital medium is an expectation in normal life. Education is being technologically driven."

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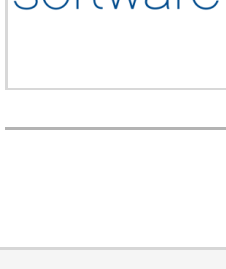
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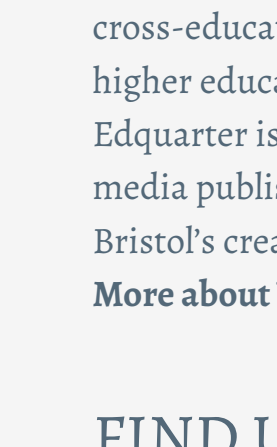


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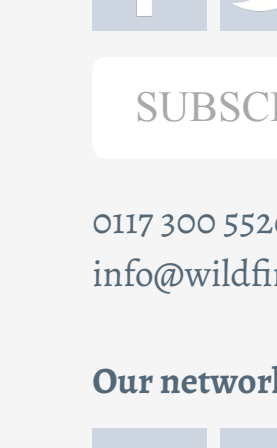
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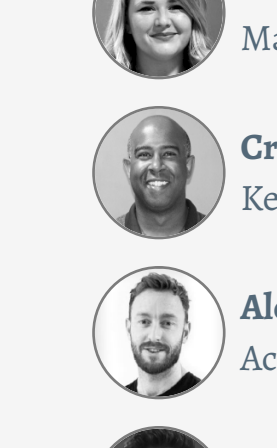
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