"**MAPS – mainstreaming analysis of pupils' suggestions: will education and transport professionals ever feel comfortable incorporating pupils' views in their policies**?"

Take care not to believe the hype, having feet in various camps one sees the kidology and 'Tabloid Thinking' that takes place at all levels from the school through to Whitehall. This is leading us to islands of excellence* in a sea of mediocrity – all pressure is on demonstrating performance at the expense of honesty. The current situation is failing our students.

* One Somerset teacher:
http://www.juicygeography.co.uk/

Issues – what does reality look like?:

1. Yes let's look for and celebrate best practice but lets also look to issues of scalability and how we can take folk with us – I believe that the majority of schools and Local Authority (LA) Officers have been left behind.

2. Do we need to go 'Back to Basics' to bring the disengaged majority back on board or do we leave them to catch up? Creating a basic foundation level in the use of technology for teachers and LA officers and in incorporating the views of young people for LA officers and policy makers

3. We also need to consider the psychology, not just the disengagement with technology. Teachers can do it but they have convinced themselves that they cannot – (learning through playing with the mapping technologies and giving them time and encouragement to discover the value of such technologies in teaching / self interest tends to work). Lack of practical support for teachers and local authority officers.

4. Little evidence of intelligent life out there? Are we heading for a Tower of Babel – masses of data but limited evidence of joining it up strategically! Bringing data sets together that drive policy. LAs are obliged to consult with young people and yet have few if any means to accept data gathered from young people except through traditional routes.

5. Equally there is a proliferation of groups / organisations competing for precious space in schools timetable. Why do the good guys loose? Once successful, innovative projects find their funding withdrawn.

6. Are we not wasting valuable basic resources within LAs e.g. via the Grids for Learning, through indecision and lack of strategic forward thinking as to how to support schools? Can we bridge the vast gulf between public and private sector use of data and e technology – Why can Google Earth provide a better service and support to a school than the LA can offer? Is this a problem or an opportunity?

Opportunities – we can seize

  I. Change is possible e.g. pupil census and Infomapper

 II. Champions drive change (they need love and support) but there is resistance within Las to embrace champions. We can however, put instruments in place to bring this forward e.g. Children's Rights Commissioner

III. Joint Area Reviews – cross silo demonstration of LA performance to deliver through 5 tenants of Every Child Matters: Being healthy, staying safe, enjoyment and active, making a positive contribution, and economic and well-being.

 IV. An NGO / Academic institution to lead on different aspects of childhood – as a guide / depository of data / portal / gateway to good practice, to be consumed in a digestible format by public and policy makers alike e.g. Sustrans to lead on young people and transport

Here today:
Mobile phones with video facility
Web cams
Hand held computers for staff (and lucky students)
Google Earth & Image layers
GIS mapping and student surveys delivered over the Internet
Layering of data to show comparisons and unexpected contrasts
Blogging & Pod casting
Web 2.0 – social networking and user generated content e.g. MySpace & You Tube
Global links to schools across the world
GPS & Satellite navigation – even available off mobile phones

Not long to wait:
Schools for the future
Whole new pedagogy – how teachers teach

Andrew's favourites: http://www2.youngtransnet.org.uk/portal/somerset.asp
Links section – Mapping and GIS

What students and teachers know about GIS:
http://mapzone.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/giszone/gateway.cfm
http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/gtip/gis

Examples of how GIS is used in government & business:
http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/business/casestudies/

Research on incorporating young people's views in local authority:
http://www.jrf.org.uk/Knowledge/findings/government/632.asp