

INAUGURAL MEETING NON-VERBATIM MINUTES

Topic: Skills for the digital age and the role of education

Date: Tuesday 28 January 2020

Time: 12:30 – 13:30, Thatcher Room, Portcullis House

Chair: Julie Elliott MP, Chair of the APPG on Digital Skills

Attendees

- Julie Elliott MP Sunderland Central
- Chris Green MP Bolton West & Atherton
- Jonathan Gullis MP Stoke-on-Trent North
- Nicholas Fletcher MP Don Valley
- Saqib Bhatti MP Meriden
- Stephen Timms MP East Ham
- Lia Nici MP Great Grimsby
- Gagan Mohindra MP South West Hertfordshire
- Miriam Cates MP Penistone & Stocksbridge
- Emma Hardy MP, Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle, Shadow Minister for Education
- David Jaffa, Owner, Sam Learning and The Jaffa Foundation
- Tim Scratcherd, Operations Director, The Education Technology Association
- Alice Kozub, Chief Marketing Officer, Schuh
- Karine George, Education Consultant
- Dawn Hallybone, Education Consultant

Minutes

The meeting began with the formal election of officers and the agreement of terms of reference for the APPG.

The following officers were elected to the group:

- Julie Elliott MP was re-elected as Chair
- Chris Green MP was elected as Vice-Chair
- Lord Knight of Weymouth
- Lord Lucas
- Damian Collins MP Folkestone & Hythe
- Miriam Cates MP Penistone & Stocksbridge



Following the conclusion of the election, Chair of the APPG **Julie Elliott MP** welcomed guests and introduced the APPG and its primary aim: to promote the importance of digital skills and to encourage a greater understanding of digital skills for personal, educational and career development.

Julie Elliott MP then outlined the topic of the meeting, which was to introduce skills for the digital age and the role of education. She then introduced speakers David Jaffa, Tim Scratcherd, Alice Kozub, Karine George and Dawn Hallybone.

David Jaffa introduced his organisation, The Jaffa Foundation. He raised issues such as employment rates, the impact on jobs and constituency economies, that can all be impacted by digital skills. Mr Jaffa continued that there needs to be growth in a generation of digital skills if we are to solve the crisis and come up with inventive new products. He said that we need to teach young people the digital skills required to prepare themselves for the future workplace with a range of economic skills that are becoming more valuable, these will contribute to a certainty of earnings. Mr Jaffa said this can also be transferred into declining industries that require digital skills.

Tim Scratcherd, from The Education Technology Association said that apps are very important to help with every day life. Apps empower you when you have the skills to help use them, which is difficult without some digital skills. He continued how this could impact people in the working world by not being as effective in certain roles if you don't have the set of skills to use digital technology properly. Mr Scratcherd said this stems from education, children can not just pick up digital skills and this would not be expected from other education opportunities such as learning a musical instrument. He said we can solve the problems and get things done with digital skills if we teach children effectively how to use them. Although programming is important, the vast majority of students will never be programmers. In order to be prepared for the modern global economy, we must look carefully at skills and aptitude. We have the access to the tools, and schools have been good at developing digital capability.

Alice Kuzob, from Schuh explained what her industry has to do with digital skills and why they are so important to use in retail. She continued that digital skills help employers to communicate with customers, with social conscience and the pillars of progress. Digital and tech helps run the entire business of Schuh. The apps help the business perform better and it is essential that people learn how to use them. Ms Kuzob said that many young people come to Schuh knowing digital skills but it can be skewed and the education is not suitable for how digital skills need to be used in the workplace, therefore education needs to be transformed.

Karine George, an education consultant said she had been working in the sphere since the 1980's and that the world is moving four times faster than education. She called for the need to make children work ready and to look at the digital skills needed for this. Ms George said there were certain competencies needed and there is currently a fragmented approach to digital skills. Although the landscape is promising digital technologies, there is a gap between where schools are and where they need to be, and this is growing



exponentially. She explained that the money ringfenced for digital skills is being spent on Ofsted frameworks rather than the tools to deliver digital skills. In order to achieve transformation, she said more time needs to be spent on digital skills. Teaching staff currently don't have the confidence required to use the tools. There are issues related to security and safety but digital skills need the same weighting as reading and maths. Digital skills are going to be a prerequisite for the future, and we need to allow educators the time and freedom for professional capital and to innovate their tools for digital skills.

Dawn Hallybone, an education consultant said that teachers don't have the money to spend on digital skills. There is currently a choice in schools between a digital device and a teaching assistant, therefore more funding is needed. To make digital skills effective, it must be started from early years. She said the current computer curriculum is great, but teachers are using coding when they don't have the skills. She also said that computing should allow students to be creative. Ms Hallybone said digital skills works for a variety of different industries and this needs to be realised. We should equip children by teaching teachers how to use digital skills. In training, teachers aren't even exposed to an hour of digital skills teaching and they need more. By harnessing digital skills, teachers can enhance their own competencies. They are currently sharing best practises at conferences but something formal is needed. Digital skills are something that we should never stop learning and this should be shown in the education system.

Julie Elliott MP then opened the discussion to the rest of the group. The conversation focused on the following key points:

- Chris Green MP said; cross party should be supportive of digital skills and raising the profile. The APPG is a useful forum to communicate with MPs. People should get in contact with their MPs to visit digital skills outlets to raise profiles. Schools are losing pace with digital skills. Teachers are too busy so collaboration between businesses and schools would be a good opportunity. There is a digital divide between early adopters, but we should encourage others to be involved as well.
- Pure digital skills are a marriage between skills
- What role does industry play in supporting education to deliver those skills
- We are looking at the issue from the top down which is wrong. We should be using apps rather than understanding them and should encourage young people to get into teaching as an exciting career.

Julie Elliott MP thanked the speakers and attendees and said that upskilling was the main focus of the meeting, she then concluded the meeting.