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Developing a Learning Technology Preparedness Plan

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1. Background

Web 2 & 3 technologies are increasingly relevant in educational and professional contexts (Lee & McLoughlin 2011). This is a period of rapid technological change.

Students:

- Use mobile technologies – learn ‘anywhere, anytime’; ‘Tech savvy’ – ‘digital natives’, but may lack skills in critical evaluation of sources
- Use social media to communicate & collaborate
- New ways of learning e.g. peer to peer collaborative learning; user generated content; experiential interaction; wisdom of the ‘crowds’
- Want teachers to be competent with new technologies

Teachers/lecturers:

- Need to develop student abilities to access, evaluate & apply information, but time constrained to explore new technologies
- Careers are often research driven, lack institutional support for change
- Less ubiquitous engagement with new technologies

Institutions:

- Slow on uptake of new technologies; outmoded systems; don’t want to be left behind; need new learning spaces; need to plan at the level where people will use new technologies i.e. school level

Workplaces:

- Require skills in collaboration, multi-tasking, seeking & sharing information ; and ethical practices.

2. Project aim & objectives

Aim: to develop a strategic approach for the School of GPEM to engage with emerging technologies.

Objectives are to:

- Evaluate the school’s readiness to engage with emerging technologies to enhance student learning outcomes
- Develop a Learning Technology Preparedness Plan that reflects the stakeholder needs and expectations and contributes to improve student learning outcomes.

3. Scan of emerging technologies

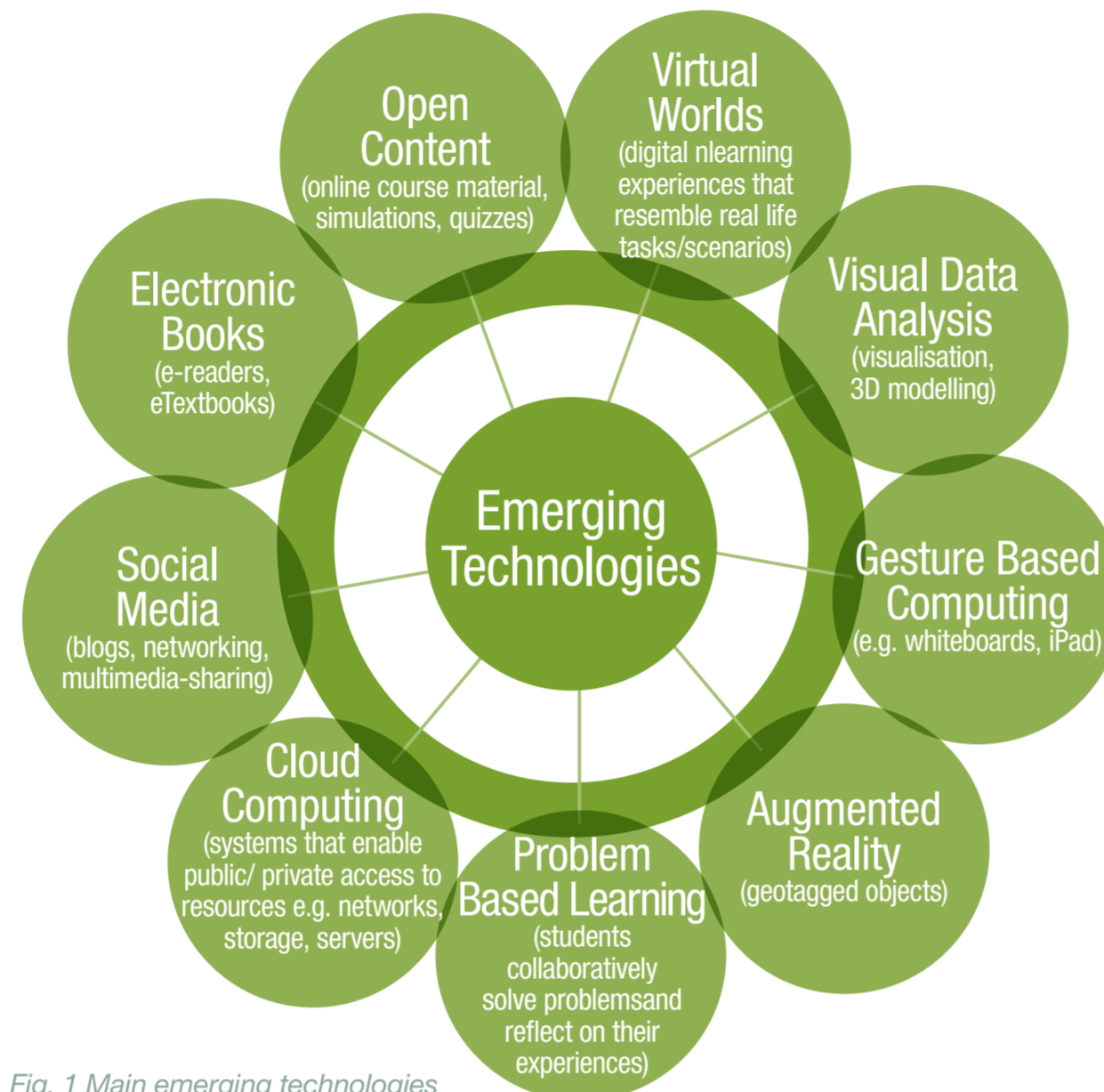


Fig. 1 Main emerging technologies

4. Visioning workshops – staff and students

Staff and students separately participated in workshops to clarify their vision for engagement with technology. Divergent views emerged.

Staff:

- Pedagogy driven not technology driven
- Focuses on important learning outcomes
- Collaborative learning and participation in a community of practice
- Supported by the school/university (e.g. training & support, learning spaces)
- Showcased and lead by champions
- Engages all staff and students (brings staff along, no coercion)
- Focus on low threshold applications (current ,inexpensive, reliable)

Students:

- Blended learning opportunities
- Spaces (labs, learning areas) and pedagogy integrated with ICT
- Less crowded due to better external study conditions
- Personal contact not replaced
- Smaller, more interactive classes

5. Online survey

Separate surveys were conducted with staff and students, incorporating about 30 questions relating to the types of technologies used, age of the technologies, time spent, main activities undertaken, types of apps downloaded, use of technologies in/outside of classes, use of social networking, experience, level of skill, attitudes to new technologies (Fig. 2) and teaching/learning preferences.

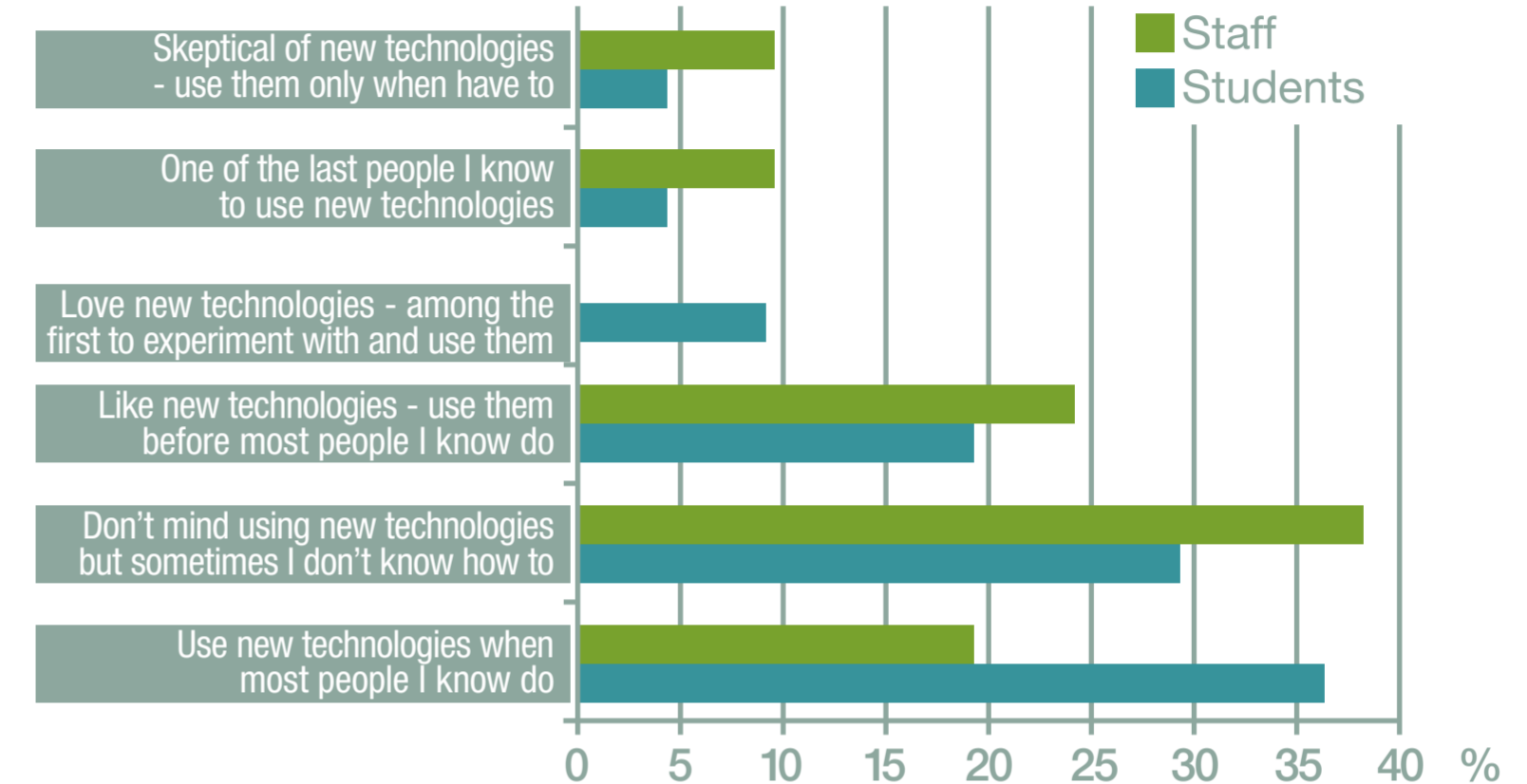


Fig. 2 Staff and student attitudes to the adoption of new technologies

“GPEM will be a careful and reasonable adopter of ET” Staff
 “I hate going to lectures. I prefer an interactive learning environment” Student
 “Pedagogically driven to enhance learning outcomes” Staff
 “I don’t want technology to replace personal contact” Student
 “... the quality of the [LMS] is not good... must invest in the best quality technology” Student
 “Meeting or matching student demands re access to learning” Staff
 “I want to maintain interaction with other students” Student

6. Focus groups

Two separate focus groups were facilitated by an external facilitator and involved: UG & PG coursework students; and research students.

“Lecturers need to be amenable to interacting and sharing ideas with students online”

“It must be accessible by all”

“We should embrace technology and the wide range of learning options”

“Don’t get carried away with gizmos – it must help us with our learning”

“Lecturers should also learn from us – develop a learning community”

“We should build on the technologies that work now”

7. The plan and implementation

The Preparedness Plan will outline the school vision, key strategies, a staged approach outlining key actions, training and support for staff, budget issues, expected outcomes and a monitoring and evaluation framework.