



BBC Digital Curriculum – New Service Approval Application

Consultation response from the Educational Software Publishers Association (ESPA)

The Educational Software Publishers Association (**ESPA**) consists of 30 companies – from small specialist innovators to global players. **ESPA** was a separate trade body until it joined the British Educational Suppliers Association (**BESA**) and is now a Special Interest Group within it.

ESPA companies have been at the forefront of digital learning and educational software design since the 1960s, making a real difference in education.

ESPA companies together have a wealth of knowledge and experience in creating internationally-renowned, effective learning resources, developing leading-edge products well-grounded in the needs of teachers and students. These include:

- interactive subject specific software
- authoring tools
- word-processors, databases and graphics
- learning management and assessment
- control technology.

ESPA members deliver their learning resources through the widest range of channels including, the Internet, narrowband and broadband, as well as through CD-ROMs and DVDs. The wide and rich range of products and services support individual learning needs and different learning contexts including opportunities for supporting special educational needs across all curriculum areas.

ESPA offers teachers and learners a wealth of digital content to suit any style of teaching. They are experts in:

- instructional design
- cutting edge visual appeal
- understanding pedagogy and teaching methodology.

1. **ESPA** would like to reinforce **BESA**'s response and say that the BBC proposal described in this application **does not meet the remit of a public service** to increase value to schools but would replace the service currently provided by an effective marketplace. This application cannot be a valuable use of public money, or the most appropriate role for the BBC. **ESPA calls for the application to be rejected** and a positive role for the BBC to be developed.
2. The service proposed by the BBC **is not distinctive** – in range, diversity and accessibility; in technologies used; in presentation, educational scope or subjects covered. It is no different from the services already offered by members of **ESPA**. The only distinctive features – as recognised in the BBC's PWC report – are the size of the service and the fact that the resources will be free. **ESPA** members

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would be more than willing to demonstrate their products to the Secretary of State to show the innovation and range of curriculum coverage already in the market. The Minister would only need to look at the catalogues of the major distributors, e.g. AVP and R-E-M to see the range of digital content on offer to teaching professionals. This is complex, comprehensive and much of it is on-line.

3. The proposed service **threatens the health of the existing market** – a market that has served education well for over two decades. The SRU report¹ and DfES (from the Curriculum Online consultation) have found that educationalists want a strong commercial presence if the BBC enters the market, to ensure choice and diversity of resources. No member of **ESPA** can compete with a free service produced by such a universal brand as the BBC – even if the BBC’s experience and effectiveness in this area has not yet been proved by research.
4. The BBC aim to **produce material to cover 50% of educational outcomes**. Although **ESPA** members have software for everything where ICT can make a contribution some subjects and parts of subjects (e.g. Sport) will never be appropriately treated this way. Furthermore as not more than 15% of the curriculum (at most) can in practice be taught realistically through ICT in schools at this time, this amount of free material will totally swamp the market and make **ESPA** members’ commercial products impossible to sell.
5. **Another fallacy is that the BBC proposal is an opportunity to industry as it offers 50% of spend** to the smaller producers. This is worth £9 million pa and is much smaller than the size of the current software market as it stands. If **ESPA** members worked with the BBC on these terms they would become ‘jobbing producers’ and lose their IPR in any digital content created. Many digital content companies trade overseas and so this would mean the end of the lucrative export market. For schools, many of which have created relationships with **ESPA** members, this would mean the end of the added value to digital products, such as training, after-sales service, regular updates and supplementary resources – all of which create successful usage in the classroom. Choice for schools will be greatly reduced by a single dominant commissioning style which will damage the competitive innovation and variety of approach that characterises the existing industry and drives it forward.

ESPA, as a part of the British Educational Suppliers Association (**BESA**) supports their detailed submission to DCMS with accompanying evidence from the SRU Report and the NERA Report, and would like to refer the Secretary of State to these detailed documents. The BBC’s current proposal is too far from being acceptable, with many features of the application based on erroneous data and misunderstandings of education and this market.

We urge the Secretary of State to reject the current application and require the BBC to reconsider its objectives and approach, a process in which ESPA and its members would be more than happy to engage.

ESPA members include:

4Learning

Advisory Unit: Computers in Education

Autodesk Ltd

AVP

¹ SRU Ltd independent market effects report forming part of Digital Learning Alliance response

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Capita Business Services Ltd
Collins Education
Crick Software
Don Johnston Special Needs Ltd
Economatics Education Ltd
Edutech Systems Ltd
Fisher-Marriott Software
Granada Learning
Logotron Ltd
Microsoft Ltd
New Media
PLATO Learning (UK) Ltd
Ransom Publishing
Reed Educational and Professional Publishing
REM (Rickitt Educational Media)
RM Plc
Science Scope
Sherston Software Ltd
SIR Learning Systems Ltd
Soft Teach Educational
Software Production Associates Ltd
Sparrowhawk and Heald Ltd
Tag Learning Ltd
TekniCAL.com
White Space Ltd
Widgit Software Ltd

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