



The Single Source for Educational Software

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BBC Digital Curriculum – New Service Approval Application

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Consultation response from R-E-M

R-E-M: Rickitt Educational Media Ltd is the leading distributor of digital content to UK schools. Since 1983 we have been scouring the market for the very best educational digital content. Today we represent over 350 publishers including all the leading names as well as the many hundreds of niche and specialist players. We classify this content against the curriculum and present it to teachers in a simple and accessible format via catalogues and a fully searchable web based database.

We have always been aware that the UK creates some of the best educational digital content in the world, this was confirmed when we attended the World Conference for Computers in Education, where UK digital content was actively sought and treated as a world benchmark.

We believe the BBC proposal to spend £150 million on its Digital Curriculum should not be allowed in its current form for the following reasons.

1. The current BBC proposal does not meet the remit of a public service as it does not add value to schools but would replace the service currently provided by an effective marketplace and would undermine a world beating industry.
2. The current BBC proposal is not distinctive in any form except for its price. Free at the point of use will only undermine the value of digital content and ensure that no commercial content can possibly compete.
3. The current BBC proposal would jeopardise the breadth and depth of any future market. Existing players would be unable to afford the investment in new technologies and approaches that ensures such a diverse and complimentary range of digital content. Teachers need content that best fits their particular students needs, competition in the market ensures breadth, which provides content, aimed at different styles of teaching and learning.
4. The current BBC proposal to create content that covers up to a maximum of 50% of the learning objectives, sounds on first reading that this still leaves room for commercial players. However many learning objectives are not best assisted with ICT, once these have been removed the BBC will be able to cover the vast majority if not all the learning objectives leaving little scope for commercial content.
5. Without competition the BBC's Content commissioner will effectively be tasked with the setting of all available digital resources for teachers. As an unaccountable body there will be no opportunity for teachers to exercise their professional judgement as to the most appropriate resources to use with their students, effectively promoting the BBC as the controller of what can be taught in our schools.
6. Without competition, there will be no pressure to take risks to develop improved technology. All of the major pieces of Educational Software over the years have been developed by organisations that started as small operations. It is without fail these

small companies who are most able to move quickly to meet the ever-changing demands from education for technology and to keep products current.

In conclusion we have highlighted a number of points that we feel provide the Secretary of State with sufficient information to reject the current BBC application. We would also like to provide our full support for both the BESA and ESPA responses, which provides far more detail, and background information on the reasons to decline the BBC application.

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