

# Can social media help overcome the problems we face in gifted education?

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# Hypothesis

- ❑ Social media offers our best chance to 'only connect'
- ❑ Link socially and geographically dispersed individuals, organisations and stakeholder groups for mutual benefit
- ❑ Overcome fragmentation, insularity and disagreement
- ❑ Increase influence and strengthen collaboration
- ❑ Prepare for imminent globalised gifted education



## 5 Dimensions of Gifted Education

- ❑ Advocacy
- ❑ Learning
- ❑ Policy-making
- ❑ Professional development
- ❑ Research



# Dimensions of social media

- ❑ Social media (Web 2.0) support online interaction through **publishing, curating, sharing, discussing, creating** content
- ❑ Social learning networks apply 2 related concepts - **social network + networked learning** - to online communities [**organised**]
- ❑ Personal learning networks (PLNs) – people one connects with for learning [**informal**]
- ❑ Vast array of tools and platforms



# Globalisation

- ❑ Integration and interaction regardless of distance and boundaries – impact of transport and (online) communication
- ❑ Interdependence of economic markets
- ❑ Development of ‘knowledge economies’
- ❑ Some countries invest in gifted education to supply highly-skilled labour
- ❑ Education market Increasingly globalised so...
- ❑ Gifted education is on the cusp of globalised delivery



## Social network use in the EU (2011)

- ❑ 35% of adults use social networks once or more weekly (56% in Netherlands), but 44% never use them
- ❑ 56% of 18-24 year-olds use social networks daily or almost daily
- ❑ 77% of 13-16 year-olds (92% in Norway) and 38% of 9-12 year-olds (70% in Netherlands) have a social networking profile
- ❑ 5% of 18-74 year-olds take an online course (14% in Finland)
- ❑ 10% of students take an online course (50% in Finland)



# Advocacy

- ❑ 'Support advocacy' depends on networks; 'Lobbying advocacy' hasn't been too successful
- ❑ Some engagement on Facebook and Twitter, much valued by participants, but limited impact on opinion formers
- ❑ Peripheral to communications strategies of international gifted organisations; some defensiveness
- ❑ Need significant increase in usage to achieve critical mass; more openness and transparency
- ❑ That would open up organised lobbying possibilities



# Learning

- ❑ Excellent fit with the personalised learning on which gifted learners depend;
- ❑ Capacity to bring gifted learners together, co-ordinate complex learning packages, support accelerative elements and peer-to-peer learning
- ❑ Some specialist providers active; other non-specialist options available – no big players targeting gifted
- ❑ Develop searchable database of learning options with Amazon-style QA
- ❑ Extend to crowdsourced 'learning pathways' linking stand-alone online materials
- ❑ Build learning communities and accreditation around these



# Policy-making

- ❑ Hasn't emerged as a focus within international organisations; little evidence of networking between policy makers
- ❑ Consequent risk of 'policy tourism' and wheel reinvention
- ❑ Little specialist activity on social media (but wider education policy interests more active)
- ❑ Establish online Gifted Education Observatory stocking information, data, research
- ❑ Support parallel online collaboration, including development of international quality standards



# Professional development

- ❑ Limited focus in countries where gifted a low priority; face-to-face delivery costly and inefficient
- ❑ Bottom-up delivery models need access to best practice, not just known practice
- ❑ Few packages developed with reference to what already exists elsewhere
- ❑ Increasing significance of social media activity as PLN concept gains ground
- ❑ Build online modules around proposed Observatory; use same methodology proposed for learners



# Research

- ❑ Inaccessible and/or costly to access; inconsistent quality
- ❑ Limited networking across research community, especially support for young researchers; traditional conferences inefficient
- ❑ Existing social media research platforms are poorly used, especially by 'names'
- ❑ Develop online network linked to Observatory; form an international online think-tank
- ❑ Open up conferences via social media; part of a continuum, with events linked by social networking
- ❑ Open access to research



# Obstacles and issues

- ❑ Funding, if moving beyond free tools and platforms
- ❑ Rapid pace of change; hard to keep everything linked together
- ❑ Not everyone has access to hardware or broadband
- ❑ Online safety, especially for younger gifted learners
- ❑ Resistance in some quarters; often predicated on perception of social media as time-consuming optional bolt-on - rather than integral and key.



# Action

- ❑ Build European Talent Support Network on social media principles – by that means ensure distributed responsibility rather than a Budapest-driven model
- ❑ Form multinational working group to develop Europe-wide social media strategy for gifted education
- ❑ Bid for funding via EU Lifelong Learning Programme to support this process
- ❑ If you aren't active on social media, sign up and explore
- ❑ Lurk if you must, but remember that 'you get out what you put in'
- ❑ If you are already active, maintain and extend your gifted education PLN



# THANK YOU!

This presentation summarises a more substantial two-part post on my Gifted Phoenix Blog:

- [Part One](#)
- [Part Two](#)

