**The NMC Horizon Report: 2012 Higher Education Edition. Austin, Texas: The New Media Consortium.**

**NMC Review**

The NMC (New Media Consortium) is an international community of more than 450 experts in educational technology, drawn from universities, research facilities, consultative boards, a variety of educational institutions and leading technology companies. They have produced the NMC Horizon report, Higher Education Edition on the likely impact of evolving technologies on the field of education since 2002. Emerging technologies are specifically examined for their probable effect on teaching and learning. The interactions within the advisory board of the NMC are focused on discussions around a set of research questions established to examine important emerging trends and critical developments. They conduct the research by using a time- to-adoption technique; each emerging technology is examined using a timescale of within 1 year, two to three years and four to five years.

The NMC Horizon report, Higher Education Edition, focuses on six emerging technologies that have the potential to be widely used over the next five years, the report emphasises the potential applications of these technologies in an educational setting.

What gives the NMC horizon report extra integrity as a credible source of information on emerging technologies in this sector is the comprehensive nature of the analysis performed, the large advisory board of 47 members is chosen to represent a broad spectrum of the key, writers, educators, analysts, contributors and authorities in the higher education sector; with the converging aims to examine the selected technologies through a lens focused on relevance to higher education.

Of noteworthy importance as graded by the NMC advisory board are the Key trends identified, these are ranked as “key drivers of educational technology adoptions for the period 2012 to 2017” (NMC Horizon report. 2012, P4).

The key trends identified are those that can demonstrate they can be embedded within the current world and in the field of higher education, these key trends are developed by identifying there degree of synchronisation with research which has been carried out to identify and rank trends.

The technologies examined are judged in the context off the following six key trends as identified by the advisory committee of the NMC, a major element of the rational for selecting these particular emerging technologies lies in there underpinning of these six key trends.

“People expect to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want to”. (NMC Horizon report. 2012, P4) This assertion is justified given that many learners will have responsibilities of work, family and logistical demands outside of their strict course requirements, this coupled with peoples heightened expectations resulting from their commonplace use of communication tools.

“The technologies we use are increasingly cloud-based, and our notions of IT support are decentralized”. (NMC Horizon report. 2012, P4) These ties in with the first trend identified, that the growing use of cloud based applications allows for greater flexibility, allowing us to log on to many applications from remote locations.

“The world of work is increasingly collaborative, driving changes in the way student projects are structured.” (NMC Horizon report. 2012, P4)The ability to teamwork effectively and to facilitate enhanced group communication both asynchronously and synchronously using both on-line and off-line collaboration aids, allowing for the exchange of multiple perspectives.

“The abundance of resources and relationships made easily accessible via the Internet is increasingly challenging us to revisit our roles as educators”. (NMC Horizon report. 2012, P4) The growing ease and widespread availability of information through new technologies is undermining the traditional role of Universities as the sole repositories of knowledge, also an emerging trend that may become a further threat to the traditional role of Universities lies with demand pull college environment, one in which the students by the nature of the easy obtainable and vast information resources available to them can effectively have an “a la carte approach” to the programs they wish to cover.( Katz, Richard, N. 2008)

“Education paradigms are shifting to include online learning, hybrid learning and collaborative models”. (NMC Horizon report. 2012, P4) The recession coupled with the severe financial crisis has forced many organisations to cut back costs across many traditional services and to be innovative in attempts to stream new and increased revenues by providing alternative methods of providing instruction. As many students already spend a large amount time using social media, Colleges have been examining the possibilities of providing a mix of hybrid and collaborative learning models.

“There is a new emphasis in the classroom on more challenge-based and active learning”. (NMC Horizon report. 2012, P5)The enhancement of learning around the exploration of real life issues, allowing for the students to take more control of how they engage with a subject, moving away from a strict curriculum based control.

The report focuses on five main challenges that it sees as currently most pertinent to this sector, financial constraints were seen as one of the main drivers for change, but the report also mentioned physical constraints giving the example of limitations on full broadband access given the physical layout of some buildings. Economic pressures were identified as having intensified, with increasing pressure to control costs, increasing or stable student numbers, with less support available due to a decrease in staff and resources. There will need to be extra effort employed on the creation of new types of peer reviews that are capable of effectively evaluating the academic endeavours of students in the use of collaborative communication methods. Mastery and indeed competence in the use of digital media is seen as a major challenge for many staff in higher education. A reluctance to explore the full range of benefits obtainable by embracing emerging technologies continues to be a real barrier to implementation. Another challenge identified is that of the traditional role of the library, which is being challenged as never before by the development of social networks, more effective and sophisticated web browsers and novel publishing methods.

The NMC advisory council drew its considerations from the potential impacts of 50 emerging technologies, this was narrowed down after successive rounds of ranking to the six most relevant. Within the near time horizon, that is within the next 12 months the report examines Mobile Applications and Tablet computing, for the intermediate timescale, game-based learning and learning analytics are examined, and further out at four to five years from extensive adoption are gesture-based computing and the Internet of Things.

**Reference:** Katz, R, N. (2008). The Tower and the Cloud, Higher Education in the Age of Cloud Computing, 2008 EDUCAUSE