



**Schools ignore BECTA's advice** publication date: Aug 31, 2007

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[Previous](#) | [Next](#)  
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BECTA takes itself seriously, after all its remit is to 'lead the national drive to improve learning through technology'. When it set up its Learning Platform Framework Agreement one would have assumed that schools would only use the Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) from the companies on BECTA's list; Azzuri, Etech, Fronter, Netmedia, Pearson, Ramesys, RM, Serco, UniServity and Viglen.

Not so, according to new research from the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) and the National Education Research Panel. Called 'Personalised Learning in School', the report (which costs £250) shows that in secondary schools Moodle is the most popular VLE and is the third most popular in primary schools.

Some people we have spoken to claim this is because the market is immature and schools are using Moodle because it is simple and easy, not realising its shortcomings. Maybe, but an equally powerful argument is that schools are using Moodle because it works, does what they need, is open source and the core software is free. While IT is full of acronyms like CRM, ERP, SCORM, VLE and LMS, Moodle describes itself as a Course Management System (CMS).

We think that SCORM compliance will become an issue for VLE's and educational content. At some point the government is going to have to mandate that all software and systems must capture data in a standardised format, and SCORM looks like the one thing they will choose. While you can argue that there are two types of SCORM compliance and one is more valuable than the other, the fact remains that regardless of what software and systems are used by schools and students, the usage and data captured must be portable if it is to be of any use whatsoever.

Coming back to the survey, it will probably make discomfoting reading for some of the investors in the companies who made it onto the BECTA framework contract. They would have assumed that being selected was tantamount to their company at least being profitable, but Moodle's success may force a rapid recalculation of their risk/reward formulas for this market.

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