



The EEG brings together leading UK EdTech companies who share a belief that there needs to be a step-change in the level of evidence available about EdTech. The EEG believes schools and trusts need to be able to easily assess the value and impact of EdTech products, services and platforms

Objectives

- Sustaining high-quality evidence gathering in their own organisations
- Helping improve evidence gathering across the EdTech sector
- Supporting schools to understand how they can assess EdTech solutions and platforms
- Improving communication to schools about how to gather evidence and monitor the impact of EdTech

#EDTECH EVIDENCE

FIVE THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN INVESTING IN EDTECH

In 2016, EdTechXGlobal – a leading education technology-focused conference – claimed that by 2020, the global market for educational technology will be worth upwards of \$250 billion. We are now in 2020. The industry has undoubtedly grown, but have we seen a positive transformation on our education system?

Research into hardware and software-based learning interventions has found that most have had either no impact, or a largely negative impact, on student learning^[1]. Where budgets are tight, time is of the essence and student progress is as divided as ever, schools should be supported by the EdTech industry, not victim to money-driven suppliers.

In an increasingly noisy marketplace, it is becoming more and more difficult for schools to fathom which education technologies to buy into. From homework products to behaviour management solutions, it is likely there is an EdTech company promising to solve all of your worries. We know that EdTech can work, but, how can you be sure that what you're using is beneficial?



HERE ARE FIVE THINGS WHICH WILL HELP YOU CUT THROUGH THE NOISE AND INVEST WISELY IN EDTECH:

1. Be clear on what problem you're trying to solve [2]

Are you aiming to improve student attainment? Reduce teacher workload? Solve behavioural issues? Increase parental engagement? Provide revision for GCSE? Or something else?

Work with your leadership, colleagues and even students to determine what the real need is, and then seek out a solution that is proven to solve this problem. Periodically take a step back and check that you are still progressing against your initial aim. And while the need might digress slightly, it is important to re-evaluate and ensure that your EdTech supplier is adding value to your school.

2. Understand the different types of evidence [3]

Research, questionnaires, case studies, blogs, data analysis, systematic reviews – to name just a few of the different types of evidence EdTech suppliers should have. A healthy mixture of quantitative (information about numbers) and qualitative (descriptive which can be observed but not measured) data should be available.

To easily understand what types of evidence you should look out for and how they answer questions (such as 'will this product work in my context?' or 'is it cost effective?'), take a look at page 9 of the Institute for Effective Education's Engaging with evidence report (2019).

3. Look for rigorous evidence [2]

In the words of Sparx' CEO Dan Sandhu: "Show me the evidence". Even though EdTech can have life-changing impacts (both positive and negative) on our learners, many suppliers fail to undertake, let alone share, rigorous evidence into the efficacy of their products.

Look out for solid, objective data which proves the efficacy of their product. For example, try to not be blinded by the buzz of some technology. Just because a product claims to use artificial intelligence does not mean that it does, that it is legitimate or proven, or that it is even useful in your school's context. Whether this is randomised controlled trials or considered qualitative research, you should clearly see its value. And, remember, engagement does not necessarily mean impact.

Be aware of self-funded studies with a small number of participants, and challenge potential biases such as unfair comparison. Evidence and research can be easily manipulated and can mislead a school regarding its impact. This is not to say that all self-funded studies are misguided or unreliable; randomised controlled trials or research which has carefully considered how to eradicate bias is available.

5. Challenge, challenge, challenge

Openly and confidently challenge suppliers. If they have an evidence-based approach, are data-driven, and collaborate with schools, they will happily share everything that you need to know.

Appendix

[1] "Technological interventions increase learning—but only if they enhance the teacher learner relationship", World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise, World Bank (2018)

[2] System Failure – EdTech Today. Varkey Foundation (2019).

[3] Institute for Effective Education (2019) Engaging with evidence. York: Institute for Effective Education

4. Unearth the evidence-based approach

In saying rigorous evidence will help prove efficacy of a product, alone it is not enough. An evidence-based approach must be embedded in the culture of every EdTech supplier. One piece of evidence part way through the development journey is not enough to prove the continuous impact the product is having. School circumstances change, students are different, technology develops – suppliers should be committed to an ongoing programme of research which demonstrates ongoing impact and value to schools.

Equally, collaboration should be a fundamental part of the approach. How can a supplier possibly solve a real need if they do not have the end users embedded in the development process? And if you can, talk to those collaborating schools for their honest feedback.

