

**EdTech Leadership Group, 03 June 2019 – Minutes**

**Attendees**

- **Minister Chris Skidmore**, Minister of Universities, Science, Research and Innovation
- **Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE**, Chair
- **Caroline Wright**, Deputy Chair and Director General of the British Suppliers Association (BESA)
- **Dominic Norrish**, Group Technology Director at United Learning
- **Lauren Thorpe**, Head of Data & Systems Strategy at Ark
- **Cat Scutt**, Director of Education & Research at the Chartered College of Teaching
- **Matthew Purves**, Deputy Director for Schools at Ofsted
- **Peter Twining**, Professor of Education (Futures) at the Open University
- **David Corke**, Director of Education and Skills Policy at the Association of Colleges
- **Duncan Baldwin**, Deputy Director of Policy at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- **Becky Francis**, Director of the UCL-Institute of Education
- **Stephen Fraser**, Deputy Chief Executive at the Education Endowment Foundation
- **Matthew Hood**, Chief Education Officer at the Ambition Institute
- **James Bowen**, Director of NAHT Edge at the National Association of Head Teachers
- **Debra Gray**, Principal and Deputy CEO at Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education
- **Mark Lehain**, Director at Parent and Teachers for Excellence
- **Nic Newman**, Partner at Emerge Education
- **Chris Rothwell**, UK Director of Education at Microsoft
- **Chris McFall**, National Education Development Manager at Apple Education
- **Dean Stokes**, EMEA Education Adoption Lead at Google Education
- **Ty Goddard**, Co-Founder of the Education Foundation and Chair of EdTech UK
- **Paul Feldman**, Chief Executive at Jisc
- **Joysy John**, Director of Education at Nesta
- **Michael Forshaw**, Founder of EdTech Impact and Innovate My School
- **Rose Luckin**, Director of UCL Educate
- **James Johns**, attending on behalf of Chris Hayman, Amazon Web Services
- **Vaughan Connelly**, attending on behalf of Ian Philips from the Independent Schools Council
- **EdTech Team [Amended]**
- **Amy Cochrane**, Senior Parliamentary Adviser, Office of The Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE

*Apologies:*

- **Hamid Patel**, CEO at Star Academies
- **Ian Phillips**, Chair of Digital Strategy Group at the Independent Schools Council
- **Scott Baker**, Headmaster at London Academy of Excellence (Stratford)

**Minutes**

1. Welcome and introductions

Minister Chris Skidmore launched the meeting and welcomed everyone as members of the EdTech Leadership Group.

Following introductions, the Minister stressed the importance of leveraging the diverse experiences and expertise of the group members - representatives from education, industry and research – but also leaving personal agendas at the door.

The Minister highlighted that **the group's role was to advise government and to develop strategic, practical actions to help education leaders, teachers and students realise the potential benefits of technology**. He tasked the group to develop an agreement between industry, educators and government to help support the aims of the EdTech strategy by the end of 2019.

The Minister formally introduced Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE (Chris Holmes -CH) as Chair of the group, highlighting his experience as an advocate for technology to support inclusion and accessibility. CH thanked everyone for being there and spoke of the importance of the group in driving forwards this agenda.

2. Purpose of the group and Terms of Reference [Paper 1]

EdTech Team [**Amended**] summarised the Terms of Reference, emphasising that the collaborative efforts between government, industry and education will help deliver the objectives of the EdTech Strategy, with the **overall aim to publish something by the end of the year that will have real impact**.

EdTech Team [**Amended**] stated that **the group's role is advisory**. The group will be accountable to Ministers and the Chair and Deputy Chair will be in regular communication with Ministers and the Secretary of State. As per the ToR, **EdTech Team [Amended] proposed that the group would convene for a year and meet every 6-8 weeks**, with the group taking action in between meetings. The group was invited to comment and agree the ToRs.

**[REDACTED]** asked if the agreement will be part of an EdTech Sector

Deal. EdTech Team [Amended] responded that this is something the group could consider in the longer term, but that the EdTech sector is perhaps not as well developed as others who have a Sector Deal and still needs some distance to travel. The Minister stated that the Leadership Group is a good place to start to work towards this.

also highlighted that the ToRs didn't acknowledge the ability of the group to commission research. EdTech Team [Amended] clarified that areas of focus for the group would be discussed in the next agenda item (Paper 2) which included an item on research.

asked for clarification on what the process was to share information with their teams/companies in ways that still abide by the rules of the group. EdTech Team [Amended] stated that any information that people wanted to share would need to be agreed in advance with the secretariat within the DfE EdTech Team ([edtech.team@education.gov.uk](mailto:edtech.team@education.gov.uk)).

There were no further comments on the ToR.

### 3. Areas of focus for the group [Paper 2]

CH opened the agenda item by stating that the focus of the group should be on augmenting impact and empowering teachers and students. He cautioned that the focus should never be about *just* technology – we want to avoid the 'cupboard of shame'. Instead, **we should seek to pool our expertise to achieve more collectively than we can achieve individually**. It will be important to agree clear priorities and focus for the group.

EdTech Team [Amended] summarised six areas of potential focus for the group which were presented as suggestions to prompt discussion:

- 1) development of the demonstrator schools and colleges;
- 2) influencing the delivery of the EdTech 'challenges' (excluding the work already in train by Nesta);
- 3) development of a programme to encourage schools and colleges to move to cloud-based technology
- 4) support institutions to begin, review and continue their 'technology journeys' (highlighting the work in train by UCL Educate, Naace and others);
- 5) explore data standards and interoperability issues; and
- 6) review evidence gaps in EdTech.

These were discussed within small groups. Key reflections included:

- The 'Review of the evidence base, gaps and how we can use existing evidence' was very important as it underpins all other areas.  
highlighted that the proposed topic to support education providers on their tech journey should be more about evaluating the impact of the technology in an institution.

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

- Some felt that data standards and interoperability was worth exploring – [REDACTED] felt the focus should be more on what we can do with data and interoperability (particularly MIS issues), rather than pursuing data standards. It was noted that interoperability issues would be closely linked with 'moving to the cloud', but the focus in this area should be on enabling institutions to move to the cloud.
- The 'EdTech challenges' and 'review of evidence gaps' are areas that should focus on pedagogy; 'moving to the cloud' and 'data and interoperability' are where you would see the most impact, and 'demonstrator' schools and 'supporting providers on their tech journey' are how you actually support institutions to use technology.
- [REDACTED] noted that there should be an opportunity for everyone in the group to focus on any one of these areas, but the research one might be too broad to be actionable.
- Learner and teacher centricity should be woven into the technology journeys i.e. the starting point should be around what the key needs are for an institution, rather than assuming that there is a positive 'technology journey'.
- [REDACTED] suggested there should be more focus on how we influence teacher training and that we need to implement technology effectively beyond just the champions. [REDACTED] also highlighted a gap between work on 'moving to the cloud' and 'data and interoperability issues', highlighting that smart infrastructure can support these areas e.g. through the use of data science and AI. [REDACTED] also highlighted that inclusivity needs to be explicit across all areas.
- [REDACTED] felt that the group needs to focus on areas where they can actually make an impact and highlighted the importance of getting the recipients of the work to decide on the areas – not the group itself. [REDACTED] agreed and said that they were all working under the assumption that technology is good for education, but people still need understanding on how, where, and when different technology can support teaching and learning.
- [REDACTED] noted that the 'demonstrator schools' item and 'a review of the evidence gaps' would do very similar things. [REDACTED] also highlighted that people in the sector are not asking for help in technology – they are asking for help in attainment.
- [REDACTED] stressed that we should be careful that demonstrator schools and colleges are not giving the evidence. [REDACTED] also stressed that large MIS providers should be involved in some of these conversations and that MIS systems must be encouraged to share data and make their MIS systems interoperable. [REDACTED] agreed with this and suggested data needs to be more open so to prevent profit making from access to MIS data.
- There was also some debate on how best to deploy technology

'evangelists' [REDACTED] stated that evangelists can help people understand what problems technology is trying to tackle. [REDACTED] however reflected that evangelists often turn people off – they often tell people things will work when they won't. [REDACTED] stated that there are some bad evangelists but more often than not they are absolutely fundamental to innovation - particularly in colleges.

- There was further debate around evidence. [REDACTED] proposed that it was important to not only focus on the evidence gaps but also on things that have been found to not be successful. [REDACTED] supported this, stating that teachers and leaders need to understand what the problems are, otherwise they won't get the right solution i.e. a lot of the 'snake oil' is down to ill-defined problems. [REDACTED] stated that much of the evidence doesn't focus on context – this is mainly down to privacy issues; however a baseline indexing of contextual factors would go a long way in building a richer evidence base. [REDACTED] indicated that a lack of evidence leads to a lack of intelligent procurement.
- There was some debate around the challenges of basing practice on robust evidence whilst also promoting innovation. This included discussion about the limitations of methodologies used to evaluate technology; Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) focus on steady factors, but technology is not 'steady' – it's constantly changing and some felt that methodologies need to reflect that. There was also some agreement that, although highly robust evidence is critical, teachers are more likely to listen to other teachers and trust their own experiences. Therefore, some felt that we need to find ways to help make evidence generation robust, low cost and teacher-led. EdTech Team [Amended] stated this would be one of the things that Nesta-led testbeds would be seeking to do through pairing schools and colleges with products and services which will then be evaluated in partnership with external evaluation partners .
- In conclusion, there was some agreement that an evidence base for EdTech does exist but needs to be collated and shared, and that there is a wide range of different types of evidence. There was a view that users, teachers and industry need to be empowered to generate this evidence, but the evidence needs to be robust.

**EdTech Team [Amended] agreed to reflect on the discussion and refine the proposed areas of focus for the Group, which will need to be agreed by ministers.** EdTech Team [Amended] suggested that members of the Leadership Group may then like to contribute to progressing these themes in smaller groups.

#### 4. Demonstrator Schools and Colleges – concept design (Paper 3)

EdTech Team [Amended] ran through Paper 3 highlighting early thinking on the demonstrator programme. The programme could focus on showcasing best practice on tech use and providing peer-to-peer support on the use of technology to tackle genuine challenges in

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

educational environments. EdTech Team **[Amended]** asked for thoughts on the draft design and the eligibility criteria for a school or college to participate in the programme and the initial thoughts on what the schools/colleges would do as a 'demonstrator'.

The resulting debate included the following points:

- [REDACTED] stated that the focus should be more on demonstrator 'projects' – as there are time-related risks to badging an institution itself (leaders and staff change, etc). Therefore there is a risk that the programme falls into the trap of BECTA ICT Mark schools. [REDACTED] proposed the focus should be on practitioner-led research as this helps inform CPD and context. EdTech Team **[Amended]** clarified that this type of evidence-generation is something the Nesta-led testbed programme would do and the demonstrator programme should help support and deliver peer-to-peer outreach to surrounding institutions.
- [REDACTED] stated a holistic approach was best: half the battle is senior leadership so starting with a vision is better. [REDACTED] asked whether the demonstrator schools and colleges could just showcase tech specialisms.
- [REDACTED] stated that it is potentially dangerous to showcase a school or college when there isn't certainty that the good work in the institution is down to the technology – it could just be down to good leadership. There was some debate about the sorts of evidence that many schools and colleges using technology have and what constitutes 'acceptable' evidence.
- [REDACTED] agreed with [REDACTED] point above that the focus should be on the people – it should be about showcasing good leadership, not good technology, when it comes to best practice of how to embed technology. [REDACTED] agreed – the focus should be on the demonstrator schools and colleges teaching others how they got from A to B and how the technology supported them in doing that, and that the demonstrator 'label' should be for a specified period of time.
- [REDACTED] pointed out that if we only focus on good or outstanding schools, we could isolate RI schools that are doing transformational things to improve. [REDACTED] agreed, stating that many failing colleges have recovered massively through the use of technology. [REDACTED] agreed, reflecting that [REDACTED] college didn't start off as outstanding, but using technology was part of their story. EdTech Team **[Amended]** acknowledged that although there may be good examples from RI schools, that ministers are likely to worry that RI schools will need to be focusing on their own improvement journey and are therefore less likely to have the capacity to help others.
- [REDACTED] stressed the need to bring in existing teacher and leader networks across the country that already do good work. [REDACTED] asked what role RSCs have – EdTech Team **[Amended]** responded that they were

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

aware of the strategy, supportive of the work and many had participated in the BESA-led roadshows.

- [REDACTED] stated that the demonstrator schools and colleges should be able to demonstrate the use of technology that many schools and colleges already have, but are perhaps not using well. It shouldn't be about getting other schools and colleges to buy new technology. It is also important to know what Ministers think success looks like in this programme. Additionally, [REDACTED] stated that we should look to schools and colleges that are already helping other institutions well.

CH and EdTech Team **[Amended]** then closed by **thanking everyone for their time, and noted that the Chairs would discuss next steps and then feed back to the group** to ensure we can begin progressing particular topics.

The date of the next meeting will be provided as soon as possible – but was likely to be mid-July.