Department
for Education

PAPER 2: Potential Areas of Focus for the EdTech Leadership Group

Purpose and action

This paper aims to help the EdTech Leadership Group identify issues that they wish to collectively take action on. The paper sets out 6 possible topics and invites discussion (and welcomes other ideas) with the aim of agreeing a list of topics the group wish to address, which the Chair/Deputy chair will seek to agree with Ministers.

This is not an exhaustive list – the Group might want to add or deprioritise certain topics, bar 'Topic 1' which was a commitment within the EdTech Strategy.

Outcome: To agree a list of topics the group wish to focus on which the Chair will seek to agree with Ministers.

Potential topics for the group

1. **Influencing the development of the demonstrator schools programme to maximise its impact. [As proposed within the EdTech Strategy]**

    The EdTech Strategy (April 2019) stated that the Department for Education would establish leading 'demonstrator' schools and colleges to exemplify how EdTech can be used to best effect, to build on existing practice within the sector and to encourage a network of peer-to-peer support.

    We propose that the EdTech Leadership Group helps drive the development of what the Demonstrator network, including for example, influencing the selection criteria, the requirements of a Demonstrator school/college and how to learn from and leverage existing support networks.

2. **Influencing the delivery of the EdTech challenges.**

    To catalyse change in the use of technology across the English education system, the DfE launched a series of EdTech challenges. These are designed to support a partnership between EdTech industry and the education sector to ensure product development and testing is focused on the needs of the education system. The challenges are to industry and the education sector (including academia) to prove what is possible and to inform the future use of EdTech across our education system. The EdTech challenges can be found in the summary of the EdTech Strategy (included with the other papers).

Nesta (an innovation and research foundation) are leading on four of the EdTech challenges focussed on formative assessment, essay marking, timetabling and parental engagement. Nesta are leading the development and the delivery of these challenges.

Therefore, we propose that the group focus on the arrangements for delivering the other EdTech challenges and ensure the opportunities are promoted to industry and to education institutions.

3. **Develop a programme to encourage schools and colleges to move to 'cloud' based technology**

The use of cloud services within education have increasingly been associated with time and efficiency savings – they can allow teachers to collaborate, share resources and plan more flexibly, and minimise the need for costly onsite servers.

Education institutions face a range of barriers to moving to the could (for example, connectivity, internal networking infrastructure, security concerns, change management concerns etc).

The Group might wish to look at how industry, education and government could encourage and facilitate the effective move to and use of cloud-based services.

4. **Supporting schools, colleges and universities to begin, review and continue their 'technology journey'**.

Some education establishments can struggle to know where to start when it comes to effectively embedding technology. The Group might want to look at be done to help explore the needs of schools/colleges/universities, what products and services to assist educators are already available (e.g. self-evaluation tools etc), what products/services are in the pipeline and whether these meet needs in order to provide practical help for educators wishing to review their own needs and embed technology effectively.

5. **Exploration of data standards and interoperability issues and how we can more strongly pursue open data, file format and integration standards.**

Research suggests that data management is one of the biggest contributors to unnecessary teacher workload across schools today[1], with further evidence to suggest this is also the case across Further and Higher Education.

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[1] Teacher Workload Survey (2016)

Our user research with educational practitioners, EdTech suppliers and EdTech experts suggests that a lack of interoperability is a key underlying issue which acts as a barrier to maximising the benefits of technology in education. Often educational establishments invest in tools and services that do not seamlessly work with their existing systems, which means that double and triple data input is more likely.

The Group may wish to explore how best to tackle these issues, building on the work of the Teacher Workload Advisory Group.[2]

6. Review of the evidence gaps in the use of EdTech.

One of the biggest barriers to the widespread adoption of EdTech across education is the often inaccessible, outdated and sometimes non-existent evidence of impact. Teachers tell us they find it hard to disseminate the authenticity of available research and assess impact. This can lead to poor buying decisions where educational establishments find themselves locked into tools and services that they are not having the expected impact.

We recognise that there are various research programmes in train focused on building the evidence of impact of EdTech. Collective consideration of the evidence gaps could help us crowdsource and/or commission research to help fill these gaps.

Questions

- Are these the right areas of focus for the group?
- Is there anything missing that the group would like to focus on which furthers the aims of the EdTech strategy?
- How many topics should the Group agree to focus on for maximum impact?
- How would the Group like to take these forward?

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[2] A group put together by the Education Secretary in 2018 and chaired by Prof. Becky Allen. The group considered how to remove unnecessary workload associated with data and evidence collection in schools.