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Improve school student outcomes with the best available tools and resources

What (if anything) needs to be done to improve the use of edtech tools (including GenAI) in schools?

The incorporation of educational technology (EdTech) tools in schools presents many benefits, including increased reach and accessibility of high-quality curriculum-aligned content, mechanisms to support timely and responsive continuous quality improvement (CQI) in teaching practices and increased student engagement. However, as we look at how to improve and scale the use of these tools the challenges of implementation including time, costs, and necessary support for integration, cannot be underestimated. This response draws on our research and practical experience and expertise in implementing programs via EdTech tools/platforms to provide recommendations on how we can maximise EdTech tools to enhance children's outcomes.

1. Individual factors

Digital tools can significantly expand access to learning materials, enabling students from various backgrounds (i.e. geographically isolated, equity denied populations) to engage with educational content tailored to their needs. For instance, online resources can be made available in multiple languages or formats, ensuring that all students, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds, have the opportunity to learn effectively.

This increase in reach and accessibility will rely on increased educator EdTech literacy (skills, knowledge and attitudes). Training programs for educators that emphasise the integration of EdTech into their pedagogical practices are essential. This professional development should equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to harness the full potential of technology in their classrooms and provide ongoing professional development to ensure current upskilling.

2. Microsystem factors

Digital platforms are difficult to integrate into existing school systems without careful consideration of micro factors. For example, school timetabling can become a challenge to implement EdTech tools if this specific school environmental factor is not considered in the development and implementation. Furthermore, technology needs to be easy to navigate, intuitive and flexible enough to adapt for place-based implementation.

For EdTech tools to be effectively integrated, the educational system must be structured to provide comprehensive support. This includes both personnel (upskilling of staff to support both content and technical implementation) and information technology systems.

Development and deployment of EdTech tools that leverage strategic partnerships is one example of an effective approach to enhance the sustained capacity of schools to deploy new

technologies. The development and implementation of successful initiatives, such as the "Decode" program, illustrate how partnerships between education, academic and industry can drive effective scaling of innovative educational solutions. Such collaborations allow for rapid integration of best practices and ensure that programs are backed by empirical evidence.

3. Macrosystem factors

Implementing EdTech solutions requires considerable time and financial investment. Schools must navigate the costs associated with purchasing licenses, training staff, and integrating these tools into existing curricula. Adequate time must be allocated for teachers to learn to use these tools effectively and to integrate them into teaching practices.

A curated and vetted lists of providers, like the Victorian Department of Education Mental Health menu, would guide schools in selecting appropriate tools that align with their needs and goals, helping to ensure that investments are made in evidence-based digital programs that enhance teaching and learning.

System-Wide Evaluations and data-driven decision making:

Continuous Quality Improvement: The generation of data analytics via EdTech allows for the evaluation and iteration of programs and curricula in real-time. Educators and school systems can leverage insights from analytics to adapt teaching strategies, ensuring they meet students' needs effectively. Educators will required upskilling to effectively interpret and action these data.

Systemwide evaluation: To optimise the implementation and impact of EdTech tools, comprehensive evaluations are necessary. This includes an assessment of harms as well as benefits. Evaluations must be designed to not only measure the benefits of EdTech tools but also to assess the potential harms associated with digital information and technology use in educational settings. Issues such as screen fatigue, exposure to inappropriate content, and the impact of technology on social relationships among students should be closely monitored.

Conclusion

To improve the use of EdTech tools in Australian schools, a holistic and contextualised approach is required. Continued and sustained investment in the factors that influence implementation of EdTech tools is critical to ensuring children and school systems reap the benefits of these platforms. By embracing innovation responsibly, supporting systemwide implementation with a view to long-term scaling, and ensuring that equity and access remain at the forefront, Australia can pave the way for a more effective, inclusive, and future-ready education landscape.

Case Study: The Decode Program

The Decode program is an example of implementation of Edtech tools within schools, showcasing how strategic partnerships can enhance the delivery of evidence-based interventions. Decode was designed to address the pressing need for mental health support within educational settings.

Decode was funded with governmental support, academic partnerships, and philanthropic contributions. The program was developed with input from stakeholders, including educational institutions, mental health professionals, community organisations, and families. This cooperative approach ensured that the program was tailored to the specific needs of the

schools and student communities.

Implementation Strategies

Decode uses collaborative implementation model, which hinges on partnerships between academia, education and industry. This model not only facilitated the rapid development and deployment of curriculum aligned content but ensured that schools had access to expertise in mental health and educational practices. EdTech tools were central to Decode, allowing schools to deliver mental health resources efficiently via a scale distribution strategy with ongoing technical and content support.

Teachers received thorough training on how to integrate these tools into their classrooms effectively. By focusing on the practical application of technology, schools could enhance their mental health curriculum while simultaneously building the capacity of staff.

Outcomes Achieved

Enhanced Mental Health Literacy: The program significantly improved the understanding of mental health issues among teachers, students, and parents. As a result, there was a greater ability to identify and respond to mental health concerns early.

Increased Student Engagement: Students reported feeling more supported and connected to their school communities. With the introduction of mental health resources through technology, students were more engaged in discussions about mental wellbeing.

Improved Access to Services: Decode facilitated better access to mental health services for students and families. By acting as a hub for information and support, the program made it easier for families to navigate available resources.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity: The program was designed to be culturally sensitive, adapting its content and approaches based on the community context. This inclusivity fostered trust and engagement among families from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that the program met the needs of all students.

Evaluation of the Program

Quantitative Assessments: The program included structured surveys and assessments before and after implementation to measure improvements in mental health knowledge, student wellbeing, and engagement levels. This method provided clear numerical evidence of the program's impact.

Qualitative Feedback: In addition to quantitative data, feedback from teachers, parents, and students was gathered through interviews and focus groups. This insight allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the program's success and areas for improvement.

Longitudinal Tracking: Decode has included provisions for long-term follow-up with students to assess sustained impacts over time, particularly as they transition through educational stages. This data contributes valuable insights into how early interventions can ripple through a child's educational career.

Challenges and Considerations for Future Implementation

Funding Sustainability: As with many prevention programs, sustained funding remains a challenge. Ongoing support is crucial to avoid disruptions in delivery and ensure that resources are continually available to meet the evolving needs of students and schools.

Navigating School Resources: Schools often balance multiple programs and initiatives, which may lead to prioritisation challenges. For Decode to remain effective, it is essential to articulate its role clearly within the broader educational framework.

Community Engagement: While Decode has been successful in many communities, continuous efforts are required to engage families actively. Addressing barriers such as stigma associated with seeking mental health support is vital for maximizing participation.

More information can be found in the publication Habgood, E., Gandhi, S., Smith, R. et al. Pilot evaluation of an innovative school-based mental health literacy program for teachers and students: The Decode Mental Health and Wellbeing Program. Aust. Educ. Res. 52, 1529–1556 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-024-00774-5>.

What more (if anything) needs to be done to improve awareness and access to high quality lesson planning and curriculum materials in schools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Is there anything more you would like to say about edtech, GenAI or lesson planning and curriculum materials?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes you?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Are you currently using any edtech tools (including learning games and GenAI) to support teaching and learning in the classroom?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, what has been your experience with using these tools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Are there things you would like to do with GenAI or edtech tools that you can't do currently? What's stopping you from doing these things?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you tell us why you are not using any edtech tools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Do you access lesson planning and curriculum materials online?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, what has been your experience with using these tools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you tell us why you are not using online lesson planning and curriculum materials?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Support the workforce through a flexible post-secondary education and training sector

Credit transfer and recognition of prior learning

In your experience, how well does the credit transfer and recognition of prior learning system operate in Australia? Does it adequately support students to move between courses or have their work experience recognised as part of a qualification? Are there ways it could be improved?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.

The participant did not respond to this question.

In the past 3 years, have you applied for credit recognition or recognition of prior learning (RPL)?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, what was your experience in applying for credit recognition or RPL like?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on why you didn't apply?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Work related training

What are the main reasons individuals and/or businesses do or do not participate in work-related training?

The participant did not respond to this question.

What role, if any, should businesses be playing to address any barriers and better support the offer of work-related training to employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

What, if anything, could government do to address barriers and better support the offer of work-related training to employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.

The participant did not respond to this question.

For business owners, managers and sole traders, how many employees do you have?

The participant did not respond to this question.

For employees/individuals, have you participated in any work-related training in the last 12 months that did not relate to general compliance (such as WHS)?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, can you elaborate on the reasons for the training and any benefits you received from doing it?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on any challenges or barriers you faced in attempting to undertake work-related training?

The participant did not respond to this question.

For business owners, managers or sole traders, have you provided or supported your employees to participate in work-related training in the past 12 months?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, can you elaborate on the reasons for the training and any benefits you or your employees received from doing it?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Can you describe whether you accessed any government assistance, what type, and the amount received? If you didn't access any financial assistance, please tell us the reasons why.

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on any challenges or barriers you faced in attempting to provide or support your employees to undertake work-related training, such as the time or cost, availability of relevant or high-quality courses, and level of interest from your employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Balance service availability and quality through fit-for-purpose occupational entry regulations

What are the effects of occupational entry regulations? Please describe your experience and name the specific occupations you are referring to.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Do you believe current occupational entry regulations are proportionate to the level of risk associated with different professions? Why or why not? If not, do you have any suggested improvements to regulations to better reflect risks? Please name the specific occupations you are referring to.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes your connection to occupational entry regulations? Please select all that apply.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which state or territory are you predominantly based in?

The participant did not respond to this question.