# BALANCING TECHNOLOGY AND TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE

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**M**any of us cannot wait to "get back to normal" after the pandemic. However, one sector that has embraced the recent technological changes it has experienced is education — and it definitely will not be going "back to normal" once we have learned to live alongside the virus.

In a recent OECD "TopClass" podcast, Andreas Schleicher, the director of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, reinforced this notion, saying that the OECD and Harvard University have conducted a survey "on how education systems see their future" and that only 20% are "aiming to get back to where they came from." Most "see hybrid learning as the new normal."

As such, there is a pressing need for teachers to be comfortable with technology as a pedagogical tool in its own right. Schleicher added that technology will help teachers go "beyond being a great instructor to becoming a great mentor, great coach, great facilitator, great evaluator." Being at ease with its use is central to this aim.

## Getting started

But what if you feel out of your depth with edtech? Trying to find your own way through can be difficult, which is why it is so important that schools are supportive and provide training on the solutions and devices they want teachers to use. These days, I believe the majority of schools realize that not providing this support is counterproductive and will try to assist teachers as much as they can within the confines of budgets.

## Making progress

It has long been recognized that when getting on board with technology, teachers move through four stages as they learn and put their new knowledge into practice.

The first stage many of us will identify with is the "survival" mode. You know the feeling; you're not sure how to use the solution and are fearful of things going wrong, so you click around endlessly — but much of what you eventually achieve is by luck rather than any degree of competency. When you're at this stage

in in your technology use, there is, unsurprisingly, very little confidence in evidence at all.

The next stage is "mastery." Here, you have received training and had the chance to practice what you have learned — by yourself and in your lessons. Things have gone well, and you feel that everything is making sense. After you have had success in the classroom on multiple occasions and have introduced more functions to your lessons, your knowledge and confidence are growing.

Now comes the "impact." This is where the technology begins to transform the classroom. You have increased your expertise and are not fazed when things do not go as planned. Students have also grown with the technology and are extremely comfortable using it. As such, classroom relationships undergo a subtle change, with the environment becoming more learner-centered and the role of the teacher gradually changing to that of facilitator.

With this new learning model embedded, the final stage is "innovation." You know when to apply technology intelligently

and appropriately for pedagogical benefit, and your user confidence is high. The depth of your technology knowledge is now comparable to your pedagogical and content knowledge, enabling you to share tips and solutions with others who are less experienced.

## Practical steps

Now that you know the theory of building your own skills, how do you go about it in practical terms? Here are a few tips to consider:

- **Use the right tools for the job.** Practicing on the device you will actually be using in class eliminates the additional tech worry of having to lead a class from unfamiliar technology.

- **One feature at a time.** Take things slowly by practicing and introducing one tech feature into your teaching at a time. This way, your head will be clearer and your tech fears minimized.

- **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** The way to refine any skill is to go over it again and again. It will get easier each time

and eventually become second nature. This is also when you can make mistakes and work out how to fix them without being under the scrutiny of your class.

- **Video is your friend.** Recording yourself as you practice is a really useful way to put yourself in your students' place and evaluate your performance, adjusting what you do where needed.

- **Have a goal.** We all work better with something to aim for. Your school should have a shared vision for its technology integration. If staff is working together toward this, sharing and discussing as you go along, it will all become more achievable.

- **WAGOLL.** It's not just students who can benefit from seeing "What A Good One Looks Like." To inspire you, you need to see real examples that model success in the classroom — either from other teachers in your school or district, or videos online.

- **Tech champions.** There is usually at least one teacher in every school known for their technology prowess. Ask for their advice or tips on the solutions you are using. If you are a "tech champion" yourself, you can help others become more confident not just by disseminating knowledge but also by celebrating their successes.

- **Make it official.** A great way to demonstrate your knowledge and validate your skills is to become certified. Many teachers have become Microsoft Certified Educators or Apple Teachers (other certifications are, of course, available).

- **PLNs.** To keep your knowledge current, try to be active in edtech personal learning networks. This will guard against any skill loss and ensure you can adapt to technology changes rather than have to run to catch up.

## Conclusion

Clearly, incorporating technology into education is crucial to help prepare students for an increasingly digital world. Despite the pandemic having propelled this vision forward and advancing schools' edtech use for the better, there is still more to do. However, for teachers who are just beginning now, taking it one step at a time and having the support of your co-workers and administrators means it is definitely not an impossible mountain to climb.