

# WHY IT'S VITAL THAT TEACHERS ARE AT THE HEART OF THE EDTECH DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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**A**s we navigate an ever-changing landscape, with provision still subject to class or bubble virus outbreaks, it's vital that continuity can be guaranteed wherever possible.

This pandemic has shown us all the important role education technology (edtech) can play but, even more importantly, we have seen how vital it is that these technologies are designed in consultation with teaching professionals. The primary purpose of most edtech is to improve the learning experience for students and streamline lesson delivery for teachers – thus helping solve the growing issue of educators' unmanageable workloads. However, when educational technologies are created without teacher input, even with the best of intentions, it can in fact hinder the learning process for students and add to teachers' already cumbersome workloads.

I firmly believe that for edtech to serve its purpose, teachers need to be at the heart of the consultation and development process. Although there are many reasons why this is true, there are some that stand out above others.

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## Intuitive edtech

Firstly, edtech needs to be intuitive. Unfortunately, it doesn't matter how many exciting functions a technological classroom aid has if you need to have a degree in computer science to navigate it. The simplest way to ensure a platform is developed to be intuitive for teachers is by developing it in collaboration with them. For example, our work with teachers has helped us realise how important it is to develop functions which lessen the administrative burden placed on teachers, freeing them up to do what they love: teach. Having easy-to-use, dedicated tools for assessment and feedback takes these time-consuming tasks off their plates.

If learning technologies are overly complex and require extensive training to use, this not only burdens teacher workloads further, but adds unnecessary stress, reduces teacher confidence in tools which inhibits their use and subsequent impact and is costly for schools at a time when budgets are already stretched beyond their limits. It's vital that classroom solutions are exactly that – a solution.

## 'Teachers know students' needs better than edtech developer'

It's vital students are engaged with their learning, especially after the major disruption they have experienced this past year. Again, teachers know their students' needs more than any edtech developer ever can, and therefore know what features are needed to ensure they remain effectively engaged. When we were developing **classroom.cloud**, feedback from teachers resulted in us complementing our existing screen monitoring capabilities by adding audio and teacher presenting functions – this helped ensure teachers could directly engage with their pupils whether they were there with them in the classroom or learning remotely.

Any classroom management platform must make it as easy as possible for teachers to engage pupils. For example, it should allow teachers to interact with students in real time via chat, and have



specific functions enabling students to ask for help, so communication is always fluid even when working remotely.

It's so easy to miss small details that could make a huge difference for both students and teachers alike. For instance, enabling teachers to monitor students' screens and having tool which allow them to take control of a students' devices could mean the difference between a young person learning in safety or being vulnerable to the dangers of an online environment. Equally, it helps ensure teachers are able to keep their students engaged in the lesson – giving them the peace of mind that their class is on track and no one is being left behind.

## Supporting unique learning requirements

The market is saturated with exciting, innovative new classroom technology. However, much of it misses the mark because it fails to meet the specific needs of teachers and students. What's needed instead, is edtech that's specifically designed to support the needs of teachers. Educators need tech that's easy to set up, configure, manage and use, as well as supports the unique teaching and learning requirements of each classroom – be that in school or remotely – and in order to deliver this successfully, teachers must be at the heart of the development process.

