Making education recovery accessible to all

Key Points

- This paper is a summary of the discussions held across three events hosted by the Education Policy Institute and the Publishers Association looking at education recovery programmes and the role of education technology within this.
- There is still much work to be done to support children and young people to catch up on lost learning following the Covid-19 pandemic and all areas of the education sector have a role to play in achieving this.
- It is the most disadvantaged students that have fallen furthest behind as result of the pandemic. This will be further compounded by the current and ongoing cost-of-living crisis.
- Barriers to recovery include:
  - Low attendance rates
  - A lack of basic skills in young children who lost out on critical early schooling due to the pandemic
  - Increasing rates of student mental health problems
  - Existing geographic, social and economic dives that have been exacerbated by the pandemic
- There are lessons to be learned from the pandemic, including "covid keepers" – policies implemented that have a beneficial effect on educational outcomes that attendees would like to see retained. These include:
  - Increased parental involvement in their children's learning
  - A focus on the role of tutoring in the education system
  - A recognition of the value of edtech for teaching and learning
  - Online continuous professional development for teachers
- Edtech has a role to play both in education recovery and in the longer-term and much can be learned from other countries about its implementation, particularly in areas with little or no internet connection.
- A digital divide does exist and there continues to be a lack of infrastructure to support the rollout of one-to-one devices and other technology.
- More evidence is needed into what works. The current evidence base is limited and does not offer enough guidance to schools to help them decide which products to invest in. Publishing and edtech companies have a role to play here in using their expertise to support schools' choices.
- We must ensure we hold edtech resources to the same standard during research – there must be the same bar of evidence for all to create a useful information base.
- Teachers should have the autonomy to decide what works best in their classrooms when it comes to choices over resources rather than being led by national policy.

- It must be recognised that edtech can only build on existing pedagogy. Where edtech usage is most successful is in schools where there is clarity in the curriculum, and where the teacher clearly identifies what they want children to learn.
- Ultimately, educators and the wider education sector have a duty to encourage the use of edtech and, in parallel, the development of digital skills, to prepare children and young people for the future.

Background

Education recovery continues to be a policy priority; the [latest EPI research](#) finds there is still much work to be done to support pupils to catch up after the pandemic. While learning losses for primary pupils in England and Wales in the 2021/2022 Autumn term showed signs of recovery since the 2020/2021 Summer term, for secondary school pupils in England and Wales, there had been further losses in reading over this period. As this research demonstrates, education recovery is critical to ensure children's education is not further impacted by the pandemic in years to come and all parts of the education sector, including Government, schools and sector organisations have a role to play in supporting this endeavour.

It is particularly imperative to maintain a laser-sharp focus on ensuring that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds receive the support they need to catch up. [Existing EPI research](#) also finds that the relative learning loss for disadvantaged pupils over the course of the pandemic is the equivalent of losing up to a third of the progress made over the last decade in narrowing the disadvantage gap in primary school education.

In July 2022, the Education Policy Institute (EPI), in partnership with the Publishers Association, brought together policy makers from the Department for Education, school leaders, and education sector experts in a public webinar to examine how we can ensure education recovery is accessible to all children and young people.

The webinar was the final event in a series of roundtables looking at making post-pandemic recovery accessible to all school students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Bringing together findings and challenges from two private roundtables, the public webinar focused on two of the crucial issues facing recovery: supporting effective catch-up programmes, and the role that edtech can play in education recovery, recognising the critical role that technology occupies in the classroom.

This paper provides a summary of the discussions that occurred during the three events. We are grateful to all participants for their contributions.

Part 1 - *The impact of the pandemic on inequality: what can we learn and how do we support effective catch-up programmes?*

The current impact of Covid-19 on children and the school system

Many speakers highlighted that the pandemic's disruption had impacted pupils and schools in a myriad of ways. From pupils falling behind, to increasingly difficult family circumstances that schools were having to adapt to, speakers made clear that the wide-ranging impacts of the pandemic on various types of pupils necessitated similarly wide-ranging and tailored approaches to educational catch up.

Levelling up at risk

Crucially, many on the panel highlighted that it was the most disadvantaged pupils that had fallen further behind as a result of the pandemic. This viewpoint resonates with much of EPI's own research into the pandemic's impact on pupils, with those from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. those eligible for free school meals (FSM) at some point over the last 6 years) consistently losing more learning than their more affluent peers over the course of the pandemic. One speaker noted that initial analysis of the most recent KS2 results indicated that this had been the case, with schools in the most deprived areas attaining lower KS2 results on average than their more affluent peers. Another speaker noted that, whilst the geographical divide was somewhat more nuanced, the pandemic's impact on pupils' learning broadly followed the north-south divide in England. Likewise, another speaker argued that the continued persistence of a 'postcode lottery', in terms of access to higher quality schooling, had to be combatted, so that every pupil has the same opportunities no matter their location in the country.

Discussion also took place around how schools and teaching staff were increasingly having to adapt to worsening family circumstances as a result of the pandemic. One speaker noted that schools were increasingly having to direct families to food banks, financial and clothing aid, and in some cases were providing toothbrushes and toothpaste to pupils. And this is before the cost-of-living crisis really starts to impact families' and schools' finances. Importantly, one speaker noted that in some schools a majority of the children may be on FSM. It is critical to recognise that this is a large group of pupils and thus any evaluation of the best support strategies to support these children must be further nuanced beyond whether they are on FSM.

Differing pictures across cohorts

The panel discussed how the pandemic had also impacted certain age groups of students in different ways and how the pandemic had negatively impacted certain skills and subjects more than others. Again, the most recent KS2 results were explored, with speakers noting how results had declined for subjects across the board, apart from in reading, but had particularly declined in handwriting and

maths. One speaker noted that this seemed to mirror the experiences children had while learning at home, with resources to support reading skills more accessible to pupils than those that support maths and writing skills. Another speaker mentioned how improving handwriting required frequent repetition, something not as easily achieved in a home learning environment.

These events were held before the summer results season and at that point speakers observed that there was currently little evidence on the impact at KS3 and KS4 level, with greater understanding expected following results this summer. EPI analysis of KS4 and Level 3 results found that, as planned by Ofsted, the grading distribution lay between the distributions of 2019 and 2021. There continued to be regional disparities in achievement. Further investigation over the coming years will be needed to fully understand the impact across every cohort. This being said, speakers did note that for older cohorts, routines and behaviours had already been established that could be brought back, meaning the impact of the pandemic may be less for these groups than for those who entered KS1 during the pandemic. For younger children the point was made that they also had to 'learn how to learn', as they often struggled to develop this skill during the pandemic. It was feared that the longer-term impact would be worse for younger children if not addressed rapidly e.g. with more targeted resources.

Speakers also spoke of the importance of not overlooking the impact the pandemic had on pupils in early years who had not progressed as they would have otherwise done through playgroups, having largely been confined to home environments. It was agreed that entry into the education system could be a particular challenge for this group, but that it was likely that these gaps would close over time.

Longer-term benefits resulting from the pandemic

While the pandemic has caused many challenges as mentioned above, the discussion also explored the importance of focusing on what we can learn from the pandemic, noting that there are several benefits that may support students, teachers, and schools in the long term. As one speaker highlighted, schools that are 'recovering well' should be able to shed light on how other schools can be better supported to, in turn, support their pupils. Learning from schools that are succeeding in the process of recovery could help others to recognise how to effectively deliver 'targeted support,' a reference to the recent 'Opportunity for all' Schools White Paper.

In response to the pandemic, several interventions have also been introduced such as the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) that will continue to provide benefits to some students, and there has been a renewed emphasis placed on interventions being evidence-based. Participants expressed a wide range of views on the contribution and potential of Oak National Academy. Most participants thought Oak had made a significant contribution during the pandemic, but there were different views on whether Oak should play a larger and long-term role in the system. While some thought this might help support teachers, others felt that this could crowd out other higher quality investment in curriculum and teaching resources, and that its reach and quality were over-stated.

Another positive effect of the pandemic that was recognised by several panellists is the major improvements in remote learning in terms of equipment, skills and attitudes. In comparison to before the pandemic, a further two million laptops have been placed in schools and homes, making progress to address the digital divide that places some students at a disadvantage. While many were initially sceptical about remote learning, teachers and students have gained core skills in digital literacy and discovered other benefits. Despite this, the panellists agreed that remote learning cannot always compete with the advantages of face-to-face teaching and that a hybrid approach would be most advantageous. This will be further explored in the second section of the paper.

Although the panellists recognised that the challenge of home learning caused a great deal of stress for many parents, home learning also encouraged a greater degree of parental involvement. The importance of the home learning environment has also been recognised, encouraging parents to create a quiet space to support study and focus, where they are in a position to do so. Both at home and in the classroom, there has been a transformational focus on mental health, and the value of schools and teachers in the wider community has also been highlighted. The challenges faced by the education sector following the pandemic are great, however the panellists agreed that the benefits resulting from the pandemic offer a unique chance for reform. However, it was discussed that the opportunity for real change is a rapidly closing window and lessons learned from the pandemic must be acted on now if this change is to be achieved.

Looking to the future

Looking forward, attendees discussed a variety of ways in which education recovery could be shaped in the policy context of the Schools White Paper and the Schools Bill, as well as what wider infrastructure development could be implemented as part of the levelling up agenda to help close the gap.

Below are the obstacles to education recovery discussed alongside panellists' suggested solutions:

- **Attendance:** A speaker noted that if a child is not back to school in the first days of a new term, they are less likely to return to school at all, contributing to the widening gap and learning loss already observed. One speaker felt that one thing we can really focus on during the current political impasse is helping children overcome the barriers that are stopping them wanting to go back to school, including unmet special education needs, mental health difficulties, difficulty with transitions and not feeling safe in school The Department for Education advocates for a whole school approach to attendance through implementing strategies such as a designated attendance lead; conveying clear messages on how absence affects attainment and wellbeing and ensuring that staff receive professional development to deploy attendance systems effectively. This continues to be an area that requires further research attention and thought on how other organisations in the education sector,

including publishing and edtech companies, can support increased attendance, for example through dedicated resources.

- **Basic skills:** The lack of basic skills observed in many children (as mentioned above) becomes an obstacle, not only due to the catch up necessary on these skills before progress can be made, but also because the human and financial investment to support every child to reach the same standard after two years of a widening gap is much greater than ever planned for before this pandemic. Attendees shared views on the need to improve not only school standards and skills, but to ensure tailored, effective and adaptable resources and strategies are in place to ensure school leaders, teachers and families are able to work towards the common goal of education recovery and student success.

- **Mental health issues:** There is an increased need for mental health support for both pupils and school staff since the pandemic. One speaker noted the Oxford International Curriculum as an example of good practice to support students; here, wellbeing and mental health support is framed as a key element in the structure and delivery of learning plans, rather than an add-on, ensuring wellbeing is embedded across the school.

- **Growing divides:** It was a shared view of many attendees that existing geographical, economic, and social divides have been exacerbated by the pandemic. One attendee shared a statistic which showed that education improvement goals which had been set up in 2012 had only achieved tangible results in 2019. Since the pandemic in 2020, there has been not only regression on those improvements, but also a further 30% drop in standards and education support beyond the 2012 levels. Panellists agreed investment in the 55 areas highlighted by the Levelling Up White Paper is key in the roadmap to recovery, but that further investment, development and an overarching but adaptable policy are all needed to ensure aid and resources get to those who need it most.

- **Continuing professional development (CPD):** Panellists felt the pandemic has placed much financial, personal and professional pressure on teachers so finding robust solutions is critical. There has been increased interest and participation in CPD in the last several years, with figures having peaked during the pandemic. Attendees felt this was a very positive sign but it is critical that this is matched with the necessary resources and policies to ensure this appetite remains post-pandemic. One speaker highlighted that in particular, having access to online CPD was one of their 'covid keepers' as it meant they can carry out the training from home and don't have to work late in school which facilitates a healthier work-life balance. Ensuring these online resources are continued post-pandemic was felt to be a key lesson moving forwards.

- **Tutoring:** As mentioned above, the NTP was felt to be a positive result of the pandemic and concerns were shared over plans to reduce funding for the NTP towards the objective of

eliminating it in 2024. However, a DfE representative felt that the NTP has proven to be so successful in aiding post-pandemic education recovery that there will be an attitude shift in the way tutoring is perceived, from reactive to proactive. Once local authorities and school leaders have the evidence to prove the effectiveness and worthiness of investment in tutoring, there will then be enough information to make a decision on initiating or increasing investment in their own programmes past the end of the NTP lifecycle. Yet, other speakers felt that there continue to be issues with both the NTP and tutoring in general, beyond its funding. There was a discussion over the struggle to recruit tutors of a decent calibre in the first place and fears that an increase in tutoring would remove teachers from the workforce. A solution posed was a shift in attitude to regarding tutoring as a vocation, rather than a part-time job to ensure there is the capacity available to support all children that need this intervention.

Part 2 – *how can edtech be optimised to support education recovery, equity and inclusion?*

What is edtech?

Education technology, or edtech, is when hardware or software is integrated into education with the aim of improving student and teacher experiences and outcomes. As this definition suggests, in practice, 'edtech' as a term covers a vast array of products and services. During this event series, speakers discussed what edtech currently is and what it could be: from one-to-one devices to teachers recording lessons for pupils to return to in future; from assistive technology to apps that offer educational games; from on-screen assessment to interactive virtual learning environments. There are also a wide range of providers including edtech, technology and publishing companies that can offer support and resources to school leaders and government bodies during the decision-making process. This will be discussed further below.

What can edtech offer?

For learners

Edtech can offer an enhanced learning experience by increasing personalisation, particularly if devices are made available on a one-to-one basis. One speaker highlighted that this might include published lesson resources, regular math retrieval practice, and individualised assessment, in addition to accessibility features including translation for English as an Additional Language (EAL) students and sequencing activities for students with autism spectrum condition (ASC). Such features could offer a solution to address the highly varied needs present in the classroom, enhanced in recent years by the pandemic. As one speaker recognised, children who receive alternative forms of provision may be less likely to feel demoralised, as all students would be receiving personalised support.

Another possibility discussed was the potential for edtech to mitigate (to some extent) disadvantage in schools. In addition to bridging social and cultural differences through accessibility features such as translation, edtech has the potential to bridge the divide between home and school. Persistent absence has been one of the most significant challenges faced by teachers following the pandemic. Using blended learning platforms that can be used in both settings should support students who are persistently missing school due to illness, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and mental health and anxiety, helping prevent them from falling behind.

For educators

Some members of the panel further identified that edtech could enhance the experience of teachers. Referencing [research](#) that was conducted before the pandemic, one speaker noted that in most schools, edtech was being used only by teachers and not the students or their parents. Expanding usage to students on a one-to-one basis has the potential to free up teachers' time, allowing more space for targeted provision. Parents could also be engaged better. Pupils' learning progress could be monitored more easily through the substantial amounts of real-time data generated by digital devices. Despite these promising possibilities, the panellists also recognised that digital devices do not automatically increase learning quality, emphasising that there should be a focus on evidence, pedagogy, and proper training of staff through increased CPD.

Ultimately, the panellists agreed that advancing technologies will increasingly inform how successful societies and economies are, and that schools that choose to incorporate edtech, informed by excellent pedagogy and evidence-based practice, will be placing their students at an advantage at the present time but also for a more digital world where they will be job seekers, workers and citizens.

The digital divide

Currently, access to digital equipment is a significant challenge for which there is no easy solution. One speaker drew attention to [recent research findings](#) that showed that the digital divide is no longer about access alone, but now also concerns new divisions, such as teacher choice in relation to forms of edtech being used in the classroom. This section explores various disparities in access, environment and infrastructure which are important when considering technology use for learning, both in the classroom and at home.

Disparities in access

Edtech and the use of devices in the classroom[1] has many documented benefits. Yet there is a risk of some pupils not being able to access these resources. Panellists felt that if technology in the classroom was not rolled out to all schools and students evenly, it risked placing a premium on some aspects of education which not all would be able to access, therefore possibly widening the disadvantage gap in terms of current and future prospects. The panel argued more information is also needed on how schools and trusts make decisions on which equipment to buy, the costs, and the overall operational lifecycle of the products and services implemented.

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[1] When discussing the 'classroom', this encompasses both the physical and virtual classroom enabled by edtech, as well as the home learning environment, recognising the importance of the home in a child's learning experience.

One of the participants laid out the need to understand digital access in two ways:

A. **Where technology is being accessed:** it was argued that providing equipment in school is not enough as it fails to consider revision, homework, and other forms of learning and assessment which happen beyond the school gates. Solutions suggested included removing obstacles to technology from home being taken into school (and vice versa) as well as co-pay and grant schemes for families with lower incomes.

B. **When technology is being accessed:** panellists suggested more research is needed into where in the learning journey technology should best be used, and how to measure its overall net impact, in assessment and other areas of learning. It was recognised that technology is not yet advanced enough to be used across all phases - in later stages of school assessment, namely GCSEs and A-Levels, human reasoning is needed for subjective subject marking. Here, the concern over the imperative need for technology was agreed as less of a priority.

The home environment and geographic differences

Participants also discussed the importance of a suitable home environment for children to work in. It was argued schools can provide devices for students to take home, but if their home environment is not conducive to learning, the impact of device ownership would be limited. Issues raised included connectivity, access to broadband, a safe and quiet space to work in, and assistance and supervision from a parent when required. Improving current infrastructure such as broadband connectivity, reliability, and cost were all seen as key to lessen the digital divide, and to better realise the benefits of edtech. It was argued that inconsistent and insufficient access to tools and connectivity are one of the most significant barriers to edtech optimisation and implementation. It is important to note here that insufficient access is not only a socioeconomic issue but also a geographic one. An Ofsted speaker highlighted the 'digital poverty' in the Forest of Dean where, during an inspection, they had no phone signal for three days. Similarly, at another inspection in rural Yorkshire, the internet was very limited. This demonstrates that some schools are facing significant initial hurdles in connectivity before further barriers, as discussed elsewhere in the summary paper, are even faced.

Building on the idea of geographies, several speakers also mentioned the importance of looking beyond our borders when searching for examples of best practice. One contributor had carried out work in India, where they felt that access to one-to-one devices was seen as a fundamental right in education; while this is still a question for MATs here in England, it is less so abroad. The speaker mentioned several instances where they visited schools in India where every child had a device but there was no phone signal or internet. The school leaders mentioned they wanted children to know how to use the devices offline, including making music, animations and share documents between them though not more broadly. The speaker emphasised that much is possible without internet and since technology develops incrementally, if device usage is not taught until internet arrives, then systemic edtech use founded on good pedagogy and teacher skills aren't in place when it finally does so. Another speaker supported this point by mentioning how offline programmes have also been

used effectively in other countries in the African continent, supported by devices that use long-life batteries. Closer to home, one speaker had done lots of work with Glasgow City Council; the council had done research before the pandemic into edtech use so the move to online learning was much smoother than in other parts of the country. Beyond learning, tech was also used to check in with children on their wellbeing and whether there was food at home, facilitating safeguarding. These examples demonstrate the importance of Government, school leaders and edtech and publishing companies looking internationally to learn from the examples of other countries with similar difficulties in providing digital access.

Shifts in mindset

Beyond the classroom, one panellist suggested there is a need for a cultural shift in the way technology is seen in schools, not only by teachers, but by school leaders as well. A participant presented an example where the implementation of technology had been led at school leadership level, filtered down successfully to teaching staff, and therefore to students in an tailored, technology-inclusive curriculum. This example could be a blueprint for a wider strategy on the pedagogical and operational aspects of tech implementation and utilisation, in schools and trusts.

To increase the accessibility of technology, speakers felt we must take the following two elements into account:

A. **Flexibility:** teachers of different subject areas or phases can place a varying premium and priority on the use of technology as part of their resources. Limitations in technology should be taken into consideration when designing successful implementation strategies for edtech in schools.
B. **Pedagogy:** panellists agreed pedagogy, evidence, and a focus on improving the student learning experience and outcomes should be the cornerstone of edtech implementation plans.

One participant felt technology is too-often currently seen as translational i.e. putting worksheets online for children to access, whereas the aim should be to make technology in education transformational, where technology is embedded across the curriculum and teachers and pupils benefit from the full range of opportunities edtech brings. Investment in infrastructure, devices, and teacher CPD are all necessary to close the digital divide. One participant highlighted that currently it is not standard practice for teacher training bodies to integrate edtech into initial teacher training (ITT). They felt these bodies should ensure trainee teachers work with technology during their course, so they feel confident using edtech when they enter the classroom and are equipped to support their students in using digital devices and learning resources. Investment from the national government, local government, school and trust leadership could all improve access. Panellists agreed edtech is the future, a question of not if but when, and therefore sufficient investment and the development of adaptable, realistic strategies are key to closing the digital divide and helping students catch up after the pandemic.

The role of evidence in the uptake of edtech in schools

As previously highlighted, edtech can offer much to schools, teachers and children, ranging from immediate feedback, greater awareness of challenging areas, through to data generation, personalised learning, and accessibility tools for children with SEND. Moreover, speakers' own working experience offers anecdotal feedback as to the benefits of edtech. However, a key point raised was that there is yet to be an easily accessible, comprehensive evidence base or marketplace comparing different edtech products that could help to inform teachers' choice of product. This section will look at some of the challenges surrounding the current evidence base and offer suggestions to government and research organisations on what is needed to improve the situation.

The current evidence base

The edtech market in the UK is already considerable and will continue to grow. Spurred on by pandemic lockdown measures and school closures, the UK edtech market grew by 72% in 2020 and, as of 2021, has a value of £3.5 billion[2]. One speaker emphasised that, especially given how large it is, it is crucial to understand the edtech market. There is much evidence out there on the benefits of edtech, however do we have evidence on which providers schools choose or why? Do higher income schools choose different or better providers than other schools with lower budgets? What does a better provider look like? This speaker emphasised the need for further research not only into edtech use but the varying providers and the impact they have on the schools that use them. It was emphasised that while the EEF has undertaken some meta-analyses, there are only 19 current evaluations of the edtech market in England. It is important to recognise that this poses a risk of asymmetry of information between the edtech companies and MATs or individual schools looking to invest. Edtech, publishing and assessment companies know more about their products and services, but due to little available research into what works best, it is often hard for schools to know which products to invest in for their pupils. Speakers highlighted the role of these companies in offering advice and guidance to school leaders to increase their awareness and make them informed consumers would help. Moreover, further information, generated through research and ensuring this research is easily accessible for schools, will also be crucial to correct this asymmetry.

However, one speaker noted the speed at which technology develops makes it difficult to find research on the latest options available to inform choices. Alongside research from the sector, another solution offered to aid decision-making was bringing the education community together so that those who feel well versed in the edtech space can help other school leaders who may feel less comfortable. There is a need to connect people in industry who can genuinely support teachers in their choices and create a network through which to share advice and best practice.

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[2] The findings come from a report by global recruiter Robert Walters and data provider Vacancysoft – EdTech: The Hyper-Accelerator.

What should we be measuring?

Alongside discussing how much evidence is currently available, speakers in both the roundtables and the webinar noted the importance of considering what is being measured or evaluated. One speaker highlighted the importance of embedding an evidence-based culture for the use of edtech. They recognised that other speakers had mentioned many instances of effective usage but felt it is critical to hold all edtech companies to the same standard by using the same evaluation metrics. This raised the question as to the role of government: should bodies like the Department for Education and Ofsted shape a national policy or is it a question of allocating funding to schools and offering the autonomy to choose? A government representative highlighted the survey that will be published next year which aims to capture how schools make edtech choices, focusing on heads and subject leaders. They noted that heads tend to talk about research bodies while subject leaders tend to talk about the experience of other schools in their area, relying on peer reviews and word of mouth. This again suggests another area of investigation into what influences schools to make the choices about resources that they do.

Speakers also discussed the type of analysis that is currently available. One felt that most studies have relied on correlations and randomised control trials in their research. While there is a place for this, there is a danger of attributing any findings purely to the use of technology rather than recognising other factors that may be at play such as pedagogy or changing demographics. Another felt that there is a trend at the moment for quantitative and meta-analysis, which makes for easy reading. They wanted a greater focus on qualitative and context-based studies, which would offer greater insight into the learner experience and what a product will actually be like when it is used – digging into the 'whys' more.

Several speakers underlined that when we are thinking about research into edtech, it is not about what product is used but rather *how* it used; it is critical to investigate *why* the interventions work as they do. When we evaluate edtech, it is key to focus on underlying pedagogy and consider how it facilitates teaching. There is an implicit drive towards specific types of pedagogy in every resource. Thus, this drive must be recognised when researching edtech and the role technology plays in the classroom. Indeed, speakers mentioned that the most effective uses of technology occurred in cases where teachers considered how the technology could truly compliment their pedagogy, rather than used as an add-on. Speakers advocated for a move away from edtech to 'pedtech' where effective pedagogy informs every edtech and resource choice.

Ultimately, all speakers agreed that evidence-based decision making is crucial. To ensure that school and subject leaders are equipped with the information they need to make informed decisions, it is essential to promote research into edtech providers; usage in schools and how this varies by school demographic; the learner experience and finally underlying pedagogies. There are many complex problems but there are also some simple strategies that can improve situations; it is the job of researchers to understand how these strategies work and then collaborate with teachers to help implement them at scale.

Conclusion

While the current educational landscape poses many challenges for teachers and pupils to catch up, the resilience of both in facing these challenges was lauded and speakers felt there is hope for education recovery in the future. To achieve this, speakers emphasised the importance of improving attendance rates; supporting teachers in their professional development; offering increased mental health support for pupils and education staff and, ultimately, recognising that for many, the effects of the pandemic remain and will only be exacerbated by the current cost-of-living crisis. Targeted support and more funding in the hands of schools to make decisions about what works best for them and their pupils will be necessary. Speakers felt strongly that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to education recovery.

The same can be said of edtech; with so many options on the market, teachers and school leaders have a wealth of choice but need support from trusted research organisations and policy makers in making these choices in an informed way through the creation of a richer, easily-accessible evidence base. It must also be recognised that edtech can only build on existing pedagogy. Speakers felt that where edtech usage is most successful is in schools where there is clarity in the curriculum, and where the teacher clearly identifies what they want children to learn.

Finally, speakers felt that technology is already omnipresent in our daily lives and its usage will only increase over time. The use of edtech and, in parallel, the development of digital skills, is crucial to prepare children and young people for the future. We are actively harming children if we do not offer training in these skills as they need to thrive in an increasingly globalised, technology-saturated world.