

Evidence-Based EdTech Diagnostic



EDUCATE Programme: Research Materials

EDTECH COMPANIES

Interviews

To find out how you can benefit from examining your EdTech through a 'research and evidence mindset', contact our Accelerator Team at hello@educateventures.com

- An interview conducted for research can be thought of like a conversation – if a conversation is highly structured and has specific goals. Interview data help address the “why” and “how” questions that can help you understand how to solve problems or replicate best practices with your product’s usage
- Why use interviews for your edtech research? Interviews are used very often in qualitative or mixed-methods research, and they could be useful to help you learn more about the needs of your target population at the exploratory stage, and about the implementation of your edtech product or service once a prototype has been created
- They can also be used at later, more developed stages of your product’s development, if you want an in-depth look into its real-life uses within its context and the way it is experienced.



Types of Interview

Unstructured Interviews

- An unstructured interview does not follow a set interview schedule. The interviewer's role is to ask open-ended questions or simply prompt the respondent in ways that encourage them to continue speaking
- This technique is useful in explorative situations when the researcher isn't sure what data will emerge and wants to give the participant the most freedom. Because there are no pre-defined questions, what the participant chooses to bring up is in itself most informative

Semi-Structured Interviews

- A semi-structured interview is organised around themes that are to be covered during the interview, with a list of guiding questions. However, the order of questions can change, and questions do not need to be asked in the same way for each participant
- In addition, there is leeway for the researcher to prompt the interviewee or probe for further information. Semi-structured interviews allow you to collect data on all relevant themes while giving you the freedom to shape the conversations based on your interviewees' responses

Structured Interviews

- Structured interviews are almost like a survey given in-person (or over the phone). The interview schedules contain a structured set of questions that must be asked in the same order. Participants' responses can be easily converted to numeric data so that frequencies or patterns can be analysed. This type of interview is mostly relevant in cases where responsiveness to an online survey is expected to be low, or if the target population is not proficient at reading

Focus Groups

- Focus groups include several participants who interact with each other. In-person groups typically include between 6-8 participants. Online groups should not include more than 4 participants, or else some of them will likely be left out of the conversation
- The difference between a focus group and a group interview is that the conversations between members of the group itself drive the interview, rather than the researcher. This requires a researcher who is specifically skilled at conducting focus groups. Focus groups work best when there are no hierarchical differences between participants, such as teachers and a headmaster

Expert Tips

1. Make sure the interviewers have read and understood the questions beforehand
2. Interviews should be recorded and transcribed – it is very difficult to write during an interview and still keep track of the conversation and notice interesting information
3. Notify the participants that the conversation is being recorded and explain to them what their inputs will be used for
4. Be open to hearing things that you did not anticipate. Participants might bring up important points that may not have been a part of your agenda. Enable enough time for them to develop these inputs, so you can assess whether they might be informative to you or not
5. Interviews are about listening, not about being heard



Evidence in EdTech

To find out how **you** can benefit from examining your EdTech through a '**research and evidence mindset**', contact our **Accelerator Team** at hello@educateventures.com

- Evidence of the **impact** of EdTech on teaching and learning is often at the forefront of **demands**, particularly from those who dictate the **funding** available to pay for technology within education. As has been shown in numerous **meta-level investigations**, (see for instance Cox et al., 2003), evaluation of the impact is a **challenge**. This is magnified when evaluating **emerging innovative technologies**
- **Pedagogical change** is at the core of these technologies, both because their design evolves over **time**, but also, arguably, their *raison d'être* is to **transform the learners' experience** (Cukurova & Luckin, 2018)
- The increased challenge is at least partially due to the **unwritten expectation** that, in traditional impact evaluations, evidence regarding the impact of an intervention is considered as a **shield against change**. The generation of **scientifically robust evidence** can be used by stakeholders, such as policymakers, for an educational intervention's **standardisation** and **scaling**

- **Change** is the essence of emerging technologies, though. Three years after an original report reviewing emerging technology innovations in education (Luckin et al., 2012), there was evidence that only **39 of the 150 innovations** (26%) were still in active use. Therefore, in the context of emerging technologies, more **value** is to be found in the careful consideration of different **types** and **sources** of evidence that are appropriate to the **current state of the technology** as well as in the use of **robust research methods** to generate **new evidence**
- This requires an **evidence-informed decision-making process** for the **design and use of EdTech**, rather than only considering evidence as the **outcome of the evaluation**
- Taking into account the peculiarities of the **local context**, the accumulated experience and judgment of **educators**, and the perspectives and values of **users**, and combining these three with the fourth source, **the best available research evidence**, can provide a more productive way forward in the attempt to bring evidence into **educational practice**

- Excerpt from '[Evidence & the Golden Triangle of EdTech, \(EDUCATE, 2021\)](#)' by Professors Cukurova, Luckin, Clark-Wilson

Who can help me?

*We are specialists in **educational research and evidence-based technological development** for schools and education and training businesses*

The EDUCATE Programme promotes **excellence** in the EdTech community by providing **training** and **mentoring** to support and promote the use of **evidence-informed EdTech**. Our research-focussed programme, based on the **Golden Triangle**, bridges the gaps between **EdTech designers and developers, researchers in education and EdTech**, and **users**, to ensure that EdTech products live up to their **promises**.

To find out how you can benefit from examining your school or business through a '**research and evidence mindset**', and focussing on '**what works**', contact the **Accelerator Team** at EDUCATE Ventures Research today:
hello@educateventures.com

Thanks for reading!

- The EDUCATE Ventures Research Team
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