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★edtech impact

# The 2022 Buyers' Guide

From Bett and EdTech Impact

# How this guide will help you

EdTech Impact is an independent review platform for EdTech worldwide — designed to help educators find the best solutions, and push companies to up their game.

We have created this buyer's guide to help you make the most of your Bett 2022 experience, and provide a systematic process for choosing the right EdTech for your school.

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# Define your objective

Before you begin searching for solutions, it is important to first define the problem you want technology to solve. Is there a gap within your school's digital strategy? Is it structural or educational? What specific outcomes are you expecting to improve?

On EdTech Impact, we've mapped every EdTech solution against the educational outcomes they 'claim' to improve.

## Our top-level taxonomy

**Students outcomes**
- increase attainment
- close attainment gap
- build knowledge
- increase collaboration
- improve behaviour
- improve wellbeing

**Teacher outcomes**
- improve knowledge
- improve wellbeing
- improve efficiency
- reduce workload

**Organisational outcomes**
- save money
- provide school data
- improve school processes
- improve parent engagement

## A word of caution

It can be tempting to skip the research stage and jump straight to the most popular or affordable option — you wouldn't be the first. However, poor planning has proven to be the achilles heel for many EdTech projects, leading to wasted money, low confidence next time around, and another product sitting in the "virtual cupboard of shame".

**Tip**

Every EdTech provider will tell you they can improve your outcomes. Ask them to be specific — and explain to you how they arrived at their answer!
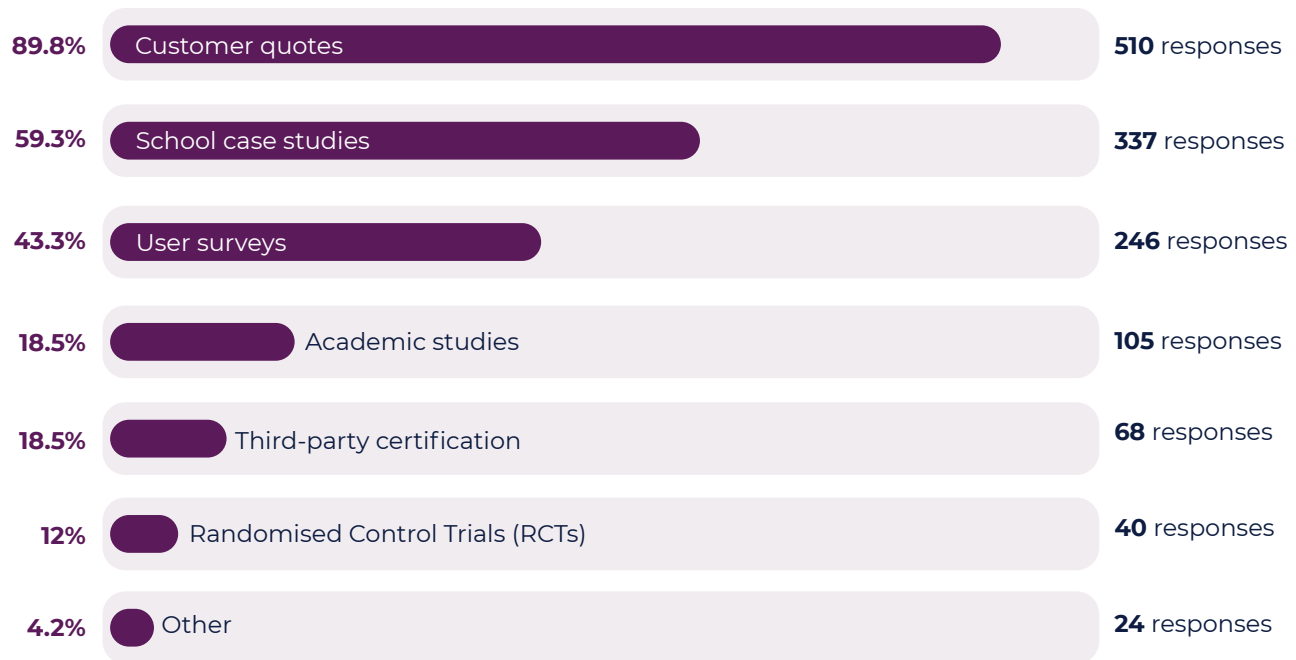
# Evaluate the impact

The EdTech marketplace is competitive, pushing many suppliers to make bold claims about their solution's effectiveness. It is up to you to examine whether these claims hold true.

## Examine their evidence base

Most EdTech solutions will have anecdotal testimonials and case studies from their best customers. While these can be a useful starting point, try to find independent research. We want to understand — in as much detail as possible - the conditions required for success, and importantly, whether it is likely to work in a school like yours.

## What type of evidence should I expect to see?

We asked 568 EdTech suppliers to share their evidence base:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **89.8%** | Customer quotes | **510** responses |
| **59.3%** | School case studies | **337** responses |
| **43.3%** | User surveys | **246** responses |
| **18.5%** | Academic studies | **105** responses |
| **18.5%** | Third-party certification | **68** responses |
| **12%** | Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) | **40** responses |
| **4.2%** | Other | **24** responses |

### Why independent evidence is important

**79**% of schools expect clear proof the solution works.

But only **8**% of schools actually trust the claims made by suppliers.

*\* Research by the EdTech Evidence Group*

## Leveraging third-party reviews

Customer reviews captured through a third-party provide additional transparency, and can help identify which suppliers to trust. EdTech Impact provides over 10,000 impact-focused reviews from educators around the world, with the ability to filter by their school setting. After all, a review from a small primary school in the countryside may not be that helpful if you work in a large inner-city secondary school!
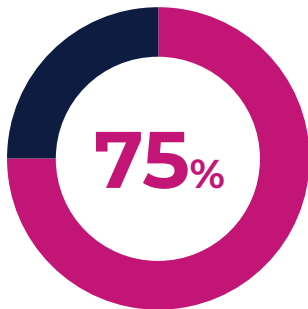
**75%** of schools leaders say the most important factor in buying a product is how relevant it is to their school

**EdTech Impact
School Buyer Survey
20/21**

## Record your own observations

While existing evidence will help you form an opinion of whether a solution might work, ideally you want to test it out in your own environment, too. A useful time to do this is during a trial period.

You want to collect as much feedback as possible from a variety of users. If you're struggling for time, try recording these observations after each lesson:

- Does the solution support and stretch pupils of all levels?
- Does the solution tell me more than I knew before about a particular group of students?
- Does using the solution improve my teaching?

**Trial tip**

Many suppliers will extend the trial period if **you're** willing to share your feedback with them.

# Check the small print

Before you sign any EdTech contract, ask yourself:
"Am I 100% confident that I know what I'm signing up to?"

No-one enjoys reading contractual small print, but once the contract is signed, your options are limited. These are the common traps to be aware of:

## 1. Work out the total cost of ownership

The price of a car doesn't include road tax, insurance or your weekly visit to the petrol station. Technology is much the same: the upfront cost may not be the total cost.

The license (subscription) cost is only one element of the total cost of ownership. Avoid future budgeting issues by being aware of the hidden costs, such as:

- Maintenance fees
- Staff training
- On-going support
- Device compatibility
- Product lifespan (if you're buying hardware)

## 2. 'Free' still comes with a cost

If you're considering opting for a free, freemium or cheap solution, ask yourself the paradoxical question: "free at what cost?"

Free solutions rarely come with support or training provisions, so be prepared to invest a lot of your own time learning how to use it. Consider how much time this takes from your day.

Be mindful that it can often be your personal data that you are selling. A good example is Facebook, where your data is used to sell third-party advertising.

Research has shown that teachers need on average

## 28 hours

of training in order to effectively implement a new technology solution. So something that saves you money in the short term may cost more over time.

"We found a free Maths solution in the hope it would help our department, but staff were spending so much time getting their heads around it, it began eating into time they could have been using for lesson planning. After two terms we pulled the plug having never fully used it."

## 3. Training and support

Technology doesn't always work first time, and often its success is dependent on the training and support provided.

**Be aware of your options.** Of the 1600 solutions that use EdTech Impact, their training and support typically falls into eight buckets:

**Training Provision:**
- Live online training
- Group webinars
- In-person training

**Support Provision:**
- Email / helpdesk
- Telephone
- Live chat
- FAQs / forums
- Knowledge Base

## 4. Data privacy and policies

One would assume that all EdTech is compliant with robust policies in place, but this isn't always the case. Dig deeper by asking these questions:

- Is the solution GDPR compliant?
- Does it interface with your MIS/SIS?
- Does it allow for single sign-on?
- Is the data stored in the system safe?
- Who is the data controller – you, the school, the supplier? If it's the supplier, why is that?
- Are there any safeguarding concerns?
- Is there an accessibility statement?

**Did you know?**

**25**% of EdTech suppliers don't have a visible Privacy Policy on their website.

## 5. Contract considerations

A growing trend in EdTech is that suppliers are trying to secure 3-year contracts with schools. This isn't inherently good or bad, but there are a few things you should consider before agreeing to a long term contract.

### Have you used the solution before?

If this is your first time, be absolutely sure this is the right solution for you. three years can be expensive to get out of, as this school found out:

*"In the demonstrations, the product looked great and we were told it was easy to setup. After six months it wasn't fully up and running and we weren't happy so we decided to find a different solution. When I spoke to the supplier, there was no option to cancel early. We ended up paying for three years for something we only used for six months."*

### Consider requesting a break clause.

Inserting a break clause into the contract is a good way to protect yourself, and gives you the flexibility to end the contract early should the solution fail to deliver upon the agreed outcomes.

### Negotiate a bigger discount.

Many suppliers publicly offer a 5-10% discount for multi-year contracts. If you're happy to proceed, look to negotiate a better price.

### Cancellation procedures.

It is commonplace for contracts to stipulate that you must give them 90 days notice that you intend to cancel, otherwise the contract will automatically renew for another year. In some cases, suppliers stipulate a 180-day notice period. That is six months and might easily catch you out, so do read the fine print.

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