

Technology and Behavioural Change in Education

Strategies in Digital Intervention

The relationship between technology and behavioural change is a field that is often ignored by educationalists. Despite its neglect, this area of study offers an exciting opportunity to explain the impact of technology on teaching and learning. Furthermore, it enables educationalists to design and take advantage of digital intervention strategies to derive positive behavioural change in teachers and students. I define behaviour as any action, conduct and interaction that supports or deflects from teaching and learning. The work of the Anthropologist Michael Brian Schiffer is not automatically associated with education technology, but his ground breaking work on the relationship between human behaviour and artifacts is unique and one which can provide insight into how education technology can influence positive behavioural change in teachers and students alike.



The relationship between learners and the technology that surrounds them should not be underestimated. 'Technology is not a behavioural phenomenon; rather it responds to (and affects) virtually all other human behaviours'¹, so it is surprising to learn that the interdependence of behaviour and education technologies has never been studied intensively. Through Michael Schiffer's work we can argue that behavioural change in an education setting can be better explained if we focus on the nexus of behaviour and technology in the context of all activities associated with teaching and learning. However, there is little known about which specific components of digital intervention can best facilitate the promotion of positive behavioural change in teachers and students. Further research into this field would be welcomed by the education sector.

The impact of digital intervention strategies will vary according to situation, technologies and pedagogy. Some will have a significant and profound effect on behaviour whilst others will have little or even a negative effect on teaching and learning behaviour. Schools should understand that the introduction of new technologies and services alone will not be enough to realise tangible educational benefits for their teachers and students.

The advent of web 3.0 services and post PC devices within the education sector has brought the norms, practices and technologies of the legacy internet era into sharp relief and exposed how inadequate they have been in shaping positive behavioural change in teachers and students in schools across the globe.

Schools will require support to devise and implement digital intervention strategies to meet the needs of their teachers and students. 'If we are going to have a serious chance of changing lives, we will need another level of innovation. Not just technological innovation – we need system innovation'². The level of innovation that is needed here will require all schools to question their commonly held assumptions of how technology can be used to support teaching and learning, they will be required to review current practices and how best they can promote positive behavioural change in all their teachers and students in this age of ubiquitous technology.

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1. Michael Brian Schiffer, Technological Perspectives on Behavioural Change, 1992.
2. Michael Kinsley, A Conversation with Bill Gates, Warren Buffet and other economic leaders, 2009