

# Ten reasons teachers can struggle to use technology in the classroom

August 14 2018, by Brendon Hyndman

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Credit: Julia M Cameron from Pexels

Somewhere in a school near you, a [teacher is struggling to handle](#) a query from a student whose laptop has a flat battery or another who's watching a funny cat video on a phone. Perhaps the wireless internet

connection is dropping in and out, or the electronic whiteboard is playing up.

While teachers are expected to integrate [technology into the classroom](#), the reality can be very different.

Some of the issues teachers can face relate to the technology itself. Others relate to [student](#) or parent expectations, or whether there's enough of the right [professional development](#) to help teachers become proficient in digital technology.

Without addressing these concerns, we risk creating a generation of students ill-prepared for a digital future.

## **The pressure to become digital experts**

No doubt digital technologies can [enhance learning](#) through accessing information and improving communication, as well as providing self-directed and collaborative learning opportunities. ICT skills can also help develop [capable](#), [future-ready](#) citizens.

So over the past [decade](#), teachers have been [expected](#) to integrate digital technologies.

Students might be "digital natives", [comfortable with and immersed in](#) technology, but they [depend](#) on teachers to learn through digital means.

The curriculum requires teachers to develop students' general [information and communication technology](#) (ICT) capabilities across all fields of study, alongside the "[technologies](#)" curriculum.

Governments have prioritised getting digital technology into schools with large-scale programs such as [Connected Classrooms](#) in NSW and the

national [Digital Education Revolution](#). Pre-service [teacher](#) training programs have been advised to "[enhance](#)" initial teacher education by using innovative technology practices.

The [Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership](#) (AITSL) also expects all teaching levels to effectively implement, use, model, lead and support ICT technologies.

## **In practice, many teachers struggle**

Despite significant [resources](#) allocated to integrating technology in the classroom, many teachers have struggled with disruptions that devices can bring, had their work negatively impacted or have not used technologies effectively. And many pre-service teachers [perceive](#) introducing new technologies as a future teaching barrier.

Here are ten reasons teachers can struggle to use new technologies in the classroom.

### **1. Introduced technology is not always preferred**

Technology isn't always the answer. Pre-service teachers have reflected on having preferences for manual writing (compared to typing) and incidences of [doubling up](#) on time writing notes. Students can also [prefer reading print](#) and teachers can [disengage](#) from introducing new technology when they don't feel it adds anything extra.

### **2. Differing device capabilities and instructions**

When students are required to bring their own device to school, there can be large [differences](#) in device capability, for example between what a cheap android phone can do compared with an iPad. Students may

have difficulty writing on small devices over long periods. Teachers may need to give multiple [instructions](#) for many different devices.

### **3. It's easy for students to be distracted**

Students [regularly use](#) devices for social media, playing games, instant messaging, text messaging and emailing rather than for class work.

Students have been [described](#) as "digital rebels" (accessing social media and texting), "cyber wanderers" (succumbing to virtual games) and "eLearning pioneers" (undertaking online studies during classtime).

### **4. Technology can affect lesson time and flow**

Lessons are interrupted by regular [negotiations](#) that reduce lesson time. This is related to students not putting screens down (during instructions), concealing screens from teachers' view, pretending devices don't work and devices being insufficiently charged.

Digital technology training and preparing lessons to include new technologies can also be [time consuming](#).

### **5. Teachers need more professional development**

There are nearly 300,000 [teachers](#) across Australia. They need access to ICT improvements for classroom [implementation](#) and to keep up with continuous technological advances. This needs to be regular, scaffolded and sustainable.

Yet, allocation of professional learning resources has been reported as [sporadic](#) in scope and quality.

## **6. Not everyone has technology at home**

Not all students or teachers use a computer at home, are frequent users, have sufficient data or [internet access](#). There is a digital divide of [reduced](#) computer literacy in students from Indigenous, lower socioeconomic or regional/rural backgrounds.

This creates challenges for teachers if they have to set different tasks for different students, or if they [avoid](#) setting homework with a digital component.

## **7. Teachers need to protect students**

Immersion of students in digital technologies has created additional demands for teachers to [protect](#) students' behaviours [online](#) (safety, legal risks and privacy) and in the [classroom](#) (theft and locking of devices).

## **8. Not all teachers 'believe' in using technology**

A wide range of research has established that if teachers don't [believe](#) in using [digital technologies](#) they will fail to transform classes, align with learning goals and integrate technology into curricular content.

## **9. Lack of adequate ICT support, infrastructure, or time**

Appropriate [access](#) to technical support (classroom, informally), availability of infrastructure (computer labs, software), policies (whether to administer digital homework) and time allocated to incorporate new technologies are major challenges for teachers.

## 10. Tensions between students and teachers

There have been [tensions](#) from teachers confiscating "personally owned" devices, difficulties accessing power sockets and when students find [information](#) online that conflicts with what the teacher is teaching.

### What can we do to overcome these struggles?

There is no single technological solution that applies for every teacher, every course, or every view of teaching. Integrating technology in the classroom is a [complex](#) and varied process for many teachers.

Meaningful technology integration depends on more than device use. There are [important steps](#) to make sure integrating technology aligns with how you teach and what you are teaching.

[Professional development](#) has tried to address teachers' technology struggles. But much of it has been limited to one-shot or "one solution for all" [strategies](#).

We need an approach to ICT professional development with different [layers](#) to handle the many various situations teachers find themselves in and to handle varied levels of teaching experience and confidence.

[Developing](#) a common vision about the role of ICT in education with stakeholders and creating a shared community of practice is important.

Without holistic improvements to teacher support and training that address the many issues teachers face, there's the risk of creating a generation of ill-prepared students for a digital future.

This article was originally published on [The Conversation](#). Read the

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Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Ten reasons teachers can struggle to use technology in the classroom (2018, August 14)  
retrieved 4 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2018-08-ten-teachers-struggle-technology-classroom.html>

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