

Targeted tech?

Adaptive technology claims to 'personalise' learning resources according to student ability and progress. Our data raises questions about the pedagogical values that these systems promote, the extent to which they disrupt classroom interactions, and the adequacy of personalisation.

"I don't want to damn the software, but no, here it hasn't done awfully well at identifying [the students' level. It gives them material which is beyond their capability."
[Teacher, School Blue]



"It's not fair if someone spends 40 minutes and gets 20% and doesn't get a [detention], but I spend 12 minutes and get 90% and I get a [detention]! "That's not fair". I would make the pass mark 80% because not all students are really that smart."
[Student, School Yellow]

"Well my Maths teacher does [display the dashboard in class] and it's like nice if my name's there so...yeah, at least for me it is, I don't know about other people, I feel like really proud my name's up there with having done like two hours of revision...I'm quite happy about that...I do like it when they show us ...it is interesting looking at who in your class has done the most."
[Student, School Yellow]



"One student is struggling to read many of the questions and multiple-choice answers. There is not always an option to listen to the text being read aloud and he becomes visibly disheartened."
[Classroom observation, School Blue]



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"The algorithm on that [English software] is that you go through and you have to get to a hundred. So if you don't make any mistakes, you go up in really nice big chunks, but the minute you start to make a mistake, it requires you to do more practice (...) which frustrates [the students] in the end. (...) Obviously the theory's good in that you need to practice more of the thing you're not very good at. But the reality is they just feel it's very negative. (...) So I think they've got their setting on that slightly wrong, even though I think it's with the best in-, it's like with the right outcome in mind."

[Teacher, School Orange]

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"Sometimes when I'm sat on my own [using the technology] (...) I'll think, I don't know what's going on, I need someone to help me but that's what the teachers don't understand, you need someone sat next to you, as a help."

[Student, School Blue]

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"I've seen some students who are issued laptops but have huge problems with inattention, where it's actually worse for them. Because they're dividing their focus between their screen and my screen. Erm, some of them manage very, very well, and [for] some students it's more of a hindrance than a help."

[Teacher, School Yellow]

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"White British students (...) can see themselves in a lot of the topics that are on platforms like that currently. But ... [what] if you're from an ethnic minority background?"

[Teacher, School Yellow]

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Questions for discussion

- What values and pedagogical purposes would we like these systems to promote?
- How can EdTech better account for the variety of learner needs and circumstances?