Introduction

About this book

We are very aware of how challenging and all-consuming the management of a language teaching organisation (LTO) or programme can be. This is true whatever the type of organisation or the department you are responsible for, whether it be a university department, a private language school, a non-profit adult education provider, a state school department, or some other educational institution. With all that you have to deal with, the thought of starting out on a process of major technological change may very well be a daunting one. When your first question is "Where do we start?", it can be easy to find yourself a little stuck.

The objective of this book is to help you understand the many options that exist and to set your LTO on the road to effective technological change. We'll guide you through the process of asking the right questions, filtering the differing advice and suggestions, and supporting your team in making the change.

The process of writing and developing this book has coincided with the global Covid-19 pandemic and all that this has entailed in the world, and particularly in our profession. Clearly, there has been a great deal of enforced technological change that has come about through this, and we'll look at this in the conclusion to this book. While the pandemic has forced many of us to take steps toward online, blended, or hybrid learning, perhaps before we have felt entirely prepared, this book will help you move forward no matter where your courses and programmes are along the spectrum of technology use. Looking at the change management strategy of integrating technology (or enhancing the technology that already exists) into an LTO's programmes, no matter what stage of implementation you may be at, can provide you with a base to create long-lasting positive change.

We hope that this handbook will be useful and supportive as you move forward and develop new ways of working and new ways of supporting student learning.

Technological change in language education

All successful organisations need to be prepared for change. Technology develops, global and local economies go through transition and evolution, and the theories and approaches that guide ways of working evolve. In all of this ongoing development, there is a need for organisational agility and readiness to respond to differing circumstances. This reality does not simply apply to technology firms, but to all industries, including education. It is said we live in a business environment characterised by "VUCA" – volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014), and in such an environment being inflexible and slow to adapt can be fatal for an organisation's stability.

LTOs are no exception, whether they be university departments, private language schools, state sector K-12 departments, training divisions at large companies, refugee resettlement programmes, vocational training centres, educational foundations, or any other educational institution or company. The successful ones will demonstrate the ability to adapt, be resilient in changing circumstances, and be ready to take important decisions. It is not just the owner or executive director of such an organisation who needs to be ready to make these decisions – academic directors, language programme coordinators/directors, and heads of administration also need to be alert to and aware of the trends and changes in their sector, and to be thinking about what changes would suit their needs and the needs of those that they serve.

The source of the most obvious changes in our profession over at least the last decade, and undoubtedly for the one to come, is technology. Technological development creates new levels of customer expectation and empowerment, including for more personalised learning, greater flexibility in class scheduling, support for administrative and academic course activities, advances aimed at improving learner autonomy, self-study and more. In addition, social media channels open up greater levels of feedback and opportunities for a collective voice, which in turn can build demand, stimulate change, and also affect reputations.

The development of technology in the education sector can feel like it is accelerating. From our experience of talking to academic managers and other managers and leaders in the language teaching industry, the pace of change can occasionally seem overwhelming. In some cases, this results in a kind of passive decision-making process, whereby new technological solutions (whether in the classroom or the office) are introduced either through simply following the competition or through bowing to the demands of others. The purpose of this book is to support managers and leaders in making informed

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decisions on technological innovation in their context, based on pedagogic criteria as well as general need. The idea is to re-empower managers to feel able to make decisions based on useful information and through the consultation of key stakeholders – most of whom will be end users of the technology chosen.

You may be asking yourself whether this book is about managing change or about evaluating technological solutions. The simple answer is that it is about both. A more in-depth response is that this book is fundamentally a book about the management of change in the education sector, with a focus on technological change. We discuss the technological needs of language programmes and advise on how you can make decisions on technological innovation or supplementation, with the goal of helping managers to implement the change from the beginning (identifying needs and potential options) to the end (incorporating the new technology into "business as usual"), but with the understanding that this process of change and adaptation is ongoing and that there will likely never be a moment when some technological change is not taking place. It is worth noting that the approach we have taken is intentionally to recognise that technology will continue to evolve, and the needs of the programme will as well. As such, the change model we discuss is intended to guide managers and stakeholders in the LTO during the process of change, and provide tools to help you evaluate technology, but does not focus on specific technology innovations or assume that any set of options may be the most desirable. Rather, the tools will help you find tailored solutions which best fit each circumstance.

This book is a practical handbook in building the conditions for successful change. It aims to help organisations make well-informed decisions, effectively implement these decisions, and sustain and evaluate the changes. As a result, the overall structure of the book relates to the fundamental processes that must be dealt with in tandem in order to successfully choose, introduce, develop, maintain and re-evaluate technological change in LTOs.

What is educational technology?

Educational technology is a broad, and arguably meaningless, term in itself. It covers a number of quite different innovations and possibilities which a language programme might consider as an enhancement of what they are currently doing. Broadly speaking, these can be divided into a number of categories:

1. The first of these, and possibly the one that most people think of as 'educational technology', is technologies that are designed to facilitate and enhance learning and the learning experience. These tools may

be used in the classroom to augment or even redefine the traditional approach to learning and teaching, or they may be intended to improve learning beyond the classroom, such as in blended or flipped approaches to learning, or they may be used for distance education programmes.

2. A second category is that of assessment, finding ways that technology can be used to more effectively measure student learning and also to release skilled people from the often repetitive and routine task of marking. Somewhat connected to this latter rationale are other advances which free teachers up from time-consuming and tedious tasks, allowing them to focus on more purposeful and meaningful work, thereby increasing motivation.

3. The third category includes the kinds of software or hardware which have been developed to improve the systems of administration, such as stand-alone financial management, student record keeping, or timetabling software, as well as integrated school management systems which can support all the tasks of language programme administration, including, in some cases, classroom functionality as well.

4. A final category of technology we can find increasingly in use in the educational setting is technologies that have not been created with educational purposes in mind, but which have become vehicles for activities and learning within the classroom and learning programmes. These can include social media, software and technologies related to administration or other career areas being incorporated into the classroom, as well as communication technologies being increasingly used to facilitate online learning.

Core beliefs behind this book

We approach this handbook with a set of beliefs and principles that underpin and shape our thinking.

Organisational goals. It is fundamentally important to keep in mind what exactly it is that your programme exists to do. By doing this when planning and making change, we start with the aspiration and the goal, and then deal with the obstacles and potential limitations, rather than the other way around. It is of course true that we cannot do everything we might want to, for various reasons. However, fundamentally our role, and the philosophy of this book, is to imagine what might be possible and then see whether it can realistically be achieved. Approaching innovation in this way ensures the sort of creative thinking that allows educators and educational leaders to consider the best-fit solution to fulfil the need. This in turn leads to better-

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informed results, a bank of information, and possible innovations that can be harnessed for future areas of opportunity, rather than starting from the question, "How much money do we have spare in the budget?" and moving from there.

People. Central to any organisation, and to all changes of whatever nature, are people. People are the instigators of change, people are the implementers of change, and people are the beneficiaries (we hope) of change. Change requires people to adapt and engage. For this reason, this book will focus to a large part on people – on communication, on relationships, on dealing with resistance, and on motivation, among other "soft skills".

The value of educational technology. Educational institutions and language teaching organisations must respond to the needs of current language learners, which includes the need to develop what are often referred to as 21st century skills (Keane, Keane and Blicblau, 2016). Technology is often at the core of how such skills are addressed for students who are increasingly more in tune with the use of technology in all aspects of their daily lives. Useful and successful innovation within educational technology is focussed on making the learning experience more personalised and interactive, on providing more scaffolded support for teaching and learning for student and teacher, on providing more effective solutions for assessment of learning, and on streamlining or simplifying the processes of school administration or the daily tasks of all staff in the language programme.

A critical approach to technology. While institutions, employees, students, and other stakeholders are often able to see how the use of technology can create a real benefit to the programme, students and learning outcomes, it is not a simple question to understand exactly *which* technology should be used, nor is it entirely clear how institutions can choose that technology and ensure best fit for the programme or model. Additionally, in a learning environment where the choice of technologies may seem unlimited, and the pressure to provide the best to students overwhelming, it can be difficult for educational leaders to avoid what Buckingham (2007: viii) called "a superficial infatuation with technology for its own sake". In short, a culture of critical thinking about technology and its role in education must exist. This will be highlighted several times during the chapters that follow, as the integration of technology into LTOs and programmes must be accompanied by real analysis of the benefits and challenges, and with a realistic perspective on how much the technology will add to the programme. We aim to share questions and tools that will provide the basis for a holistic evaluation of technology, and that also serve as a reminder for managers and stakeholders that no technology can replace strong programme foundations and personalised programme solutions.

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The structure of this book

This book has been written with a focus on practice, with the backbone of theory which will guide managers through the process of working within their specific programme needs in their own settings. Practical application is covered, which will help readers create a real proposal for managing the integration of technology in their own language teaching situations.

Within each chapter, readers will find case studies bringing alive the context and process. These authentic cases illustrate and provide context to the ideas outlined. Case studies are drawn from the authors' own experiences and from their extensive networks of colleagues and fellow professionals in the industry.

The chapters in the book will follow the basic stages of change as mapped out in Figure 0.1.
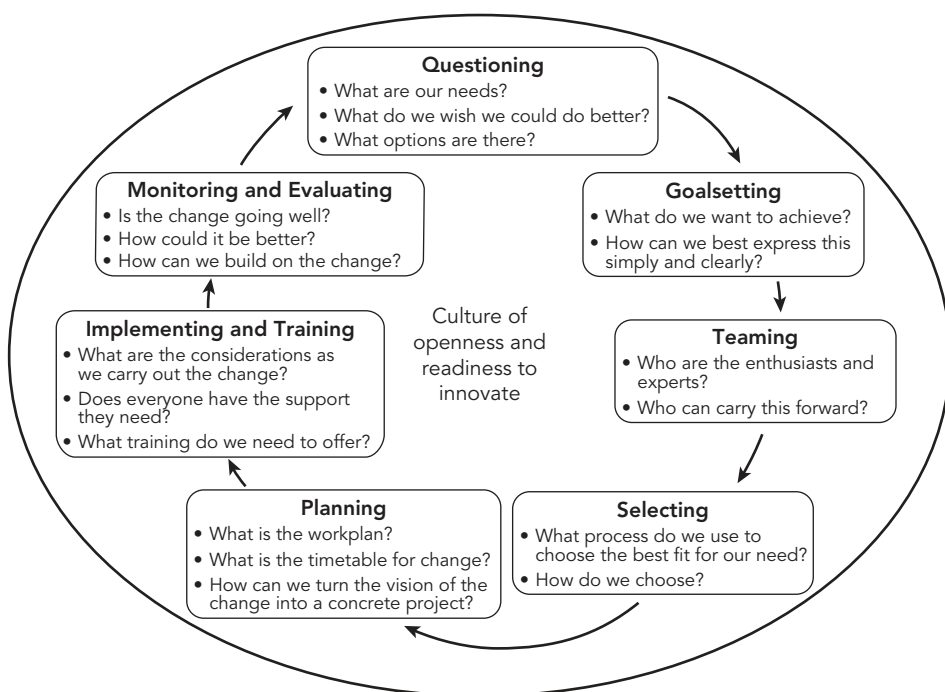

Figure 0.1: The stages of technological change

These stages of the process of technological change will be integrated through the book with change management and project management principles, to provide a blueprint which can be applied to any such transformation, combining local context with theory.

A brief overview of each chapter can be found below:

This **Introduction** defines the principles and approaches that the rest of the book is founded upon.

Chapter 1: Preparing for innovation begins by outlining the way that an organisation might promote a culture that is open to innovation and which gives staff a sense that they can suggest and promote new ideas and approaches – the context described in Figure 0.1 as a culture of openness and readiness to innovate. Subsequently, it looks at the beginning of the process of change: the Questioning and Goalsetting parts of the cycle. We look at where the motivation for change comes from, and how it can be channelled and focussed. We also address the key questions of need and applicability of technology in addressing the gaps the organisation has identified. We propose the setting of goals to both provide direction and present a clear message to staff and other people who will be involved in making the change come about.

Chapter 2: Creating a team of navigators outlines the next stage in the process of change, Teaming. We describe the process by which a team of key people are formed and can begin to work together to navigate the process of bringing about the change. We consider how technological innovations can be evaluated and analysed to meet the goal we have set, and then use the SELECT model to choose the best tool for the need.

Chapter 3: Planning the change focuses initially on the key elements involved in the planning of change. We introduce a project management approach to ensuring that the process of transition is clear and well thought through. Thereafter we provide guidance on implementing the change itself. This chapter also includes thoughts on managing resistance to change and how to engage in ongoing communication during the change process. We describe the importance of supporting end users as they deal with the challenges inherent in working with unfamiliar technology. This also includes the creation of ongoing training and support programmes, ensuring that everyone who needs to interact with the new technology is included and their needs responded to.

Chapter 4: Monitoring and sustaining change addresses the critical phase of ensuring that the change continues to be appropriately managed and monitored over time. The success of any programme, and any change within that programme, is contingent on consistent, careful review, as well as continuous contact, training and motivation for all those involved to continue moving toward its success. The topics addressed in this chapter include:

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ongoing support and necessary adjustments; maintenance/upgrade and other procedures; ensuring successes are celebrated; a team approach to ensuring support is given where needed; documenting and recording best practices; and building on the success of the change. In addition, we think about the process of re-evaluation of our innovation.

The **Conclusion** provides a summary of the process of change described in this book.

The **Appendices** offer a set of checklists and other tools designed to be of value in the process of building technological change in language teaching organisations.

(See **Appendix 1** for an overview of the stages of technological change.)

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1 Preparing for innovation

This chapter:

- considers the organisational culture that is desirable to lead change
- looks at ways of questioning the status quo, from SWOT analysis to appreciative inquiry
- explains the various sources of change, whether they be top down, bottom up or from somewhere else
- outlines how to set motivating and clear goals

Introduction

This chapter will look at the first two stages of the model of change (see Figure 1.1 below): Questioning and Goalsetting.
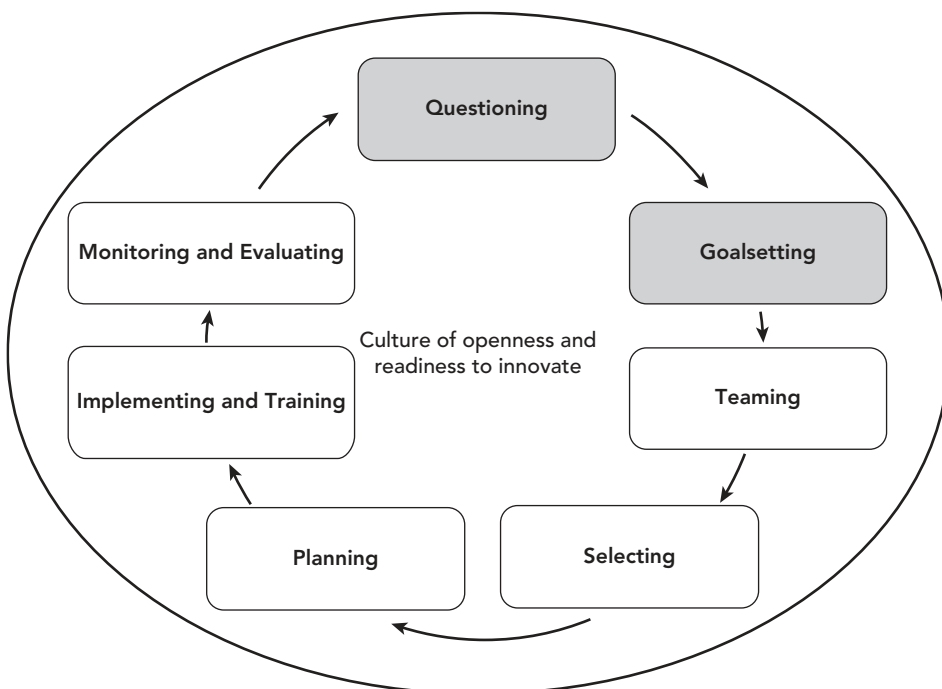

Figure 1.1: The stages of technological change

A culture of openness – creating the conditions for change

In our model of **the stages of technological change** (see Figure 1.1), the environment in which change is best supported is described as a "culture of openness and readiness to innovate". Before explaining the different stages of the cycle, it is important to outline what we mean by this, since it is arguably the foundation of successful technological change.

You may have worked for an organisation (educational or otherwise) in which people were engaged and enthusiastic, and there was a genuine sense of community and togetherness – an organisation where people felt listened to and valued, and as a result were prepared to invest their time and energy into the work they were doing... and beyond it. It's also possible you have worked for the opposite – an organisation in which people came in, worked through their hours, didn't rock the boat, and remained indifferent to how the organisation progressed. It is the first of these organisations that we are aiming for.

An outsider visiting such a language teaching organisation would see a collaborative staffroom – people sharing positive stories from the classroom, asking for help ("Anyone have any great activities to go along with Module 4 in this coursebook?"), and offering suggestions. They would also notice a sense of collaboration between teachers and support staff – teachers respecting the importance of the work done by the office staff, and doing what they could to support that work – and vice versa. The academic manager's door would be open, and she may be seen around the school, chatting to students, available to teachers between lessons, and generally ensuring things were running well.

This is the kind of school culture in which a teacher, say, might approach a manager with something she read in a journal about ways of better engaging students with technology; or in which a group of office staff might come together and think about what would make their job more productive. In short, it is an organisational culture in which change is ready to emerge, organically.

Culture, however, is difficult to change quickly. Management writers have, for decades, been looking at approaches that can be used to create a more engaged and positive organisational culture. For example, in 1990, Peter Senge posited the idea of the Learning Organisation, and at the time of writing much attention is focussed on the **Agile organisation** (see panel below). In all of these models, a set of management practices are suggested as ways of making the culture more open and engaged – from teamwork to professional development to effective leadership.

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