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Teaching practices in times of digital transformation: An introduction to the special issue

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Abstract

This special issue considers the broad and developing range of relationships between teaching practices and *processes of digital* transformation.

Relationships between teachers and digital technologies have never been simple or smooth. Technologies have sometimes been positioned as supporting learner centred pedagogies in ways that have served to disparage ‘teaching’. Specific technologies and systems have placed additional burdens on the routines of teaching practice, while device failures have led to ongoing distrust by many practitioners. And teachers have been hounded by persistent pressures to engage in ‘more’ digital innovation and to develop ever greater forms of technological expertise. Yet the experience has not been unremittingly negative. Used appropriately and in ways sensitive to context, digital technologies have empowered teachers to explore new pedagogical practices, connect students with a wider range of people and resources, support collaborative knowledge production, and even to better engage with reticent or disadvantaged students (Luckin et al., 2012).

Recent times have seen drives to deepen and broaden the incorporation of digital technologies into teaching practices, and—especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic—to accelerate the pace of the associated change (see Bligh & Lee, 2022). Digital transformation is a contested and problematic term, which, having originated in other spheres, has been only awkwardly appropriated into educational research. Yet it correctly draws attention to important relationships that link this ongoing drive to innovate pedagogical practices using digital technologies with a range of other issues—institutional structures, strategies, and management; educational business models and links with stakeholders in other sectors; and changes in economic models, political agendas and associated ideologies within those broader societies in which educational systems are situated. The impact of such issues has been extensive, yet it has most often been noted with regard to educational systems and institutions.

In this edition of *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning*, we to consider the implications specifically *from the point of view of teachers, teaching and/or teaching practices*.

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About the author

Brett Bligh is a Lecturer in the Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, and co-Director of the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning. His research interrogates the nexus of technology mediation, physical environment, and institutional change in higher education. Brett's work prioritises Activity Theory conceptions of human practice, and interventionist methodologies.

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