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People, Partnerships and Pedagogies

The end of learning design? An interactive panel on the challenges of finding equilibrium, navigating the snap back and leading innovation in post-crisis teaching and learning.

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This highly interactive and provocative hypothetical-style panel discussion will take the audience on a collective journey through the complexity and challenges of strategically designing and delivering online learning in a post-digital, post-crisis new normal. The aim of the panel is to collectively shift the dial on how we understand, articulate, and develop the benefit of learning design to the institution, how others have been extremely successful in doing that (and what can we learn from them) and how we are collectively struggling with precarious contracts, budgets, de-professionalisation and constantly shifting priorities as we return to a campus-based teaching and learning experience. Drawing on the principles of hyperreality, participants will become part of the community of a hypothetical university. Through highly interactive and immersive scenarios the panel session will collectively traverse the transitional, uncertain spaces of a post-crisis university and design for an educational future that learns from the relationships between people and technology to make teaching and learning better.

Keywords: Pedagogical change, digital pedagogy, complexity, post-crisis

Introduction

As higher education recovers from the impacts of the pandemic, some of the heroes of the sector, those who enabled rapid pivots online and ensured millions of students had access to quality learning, were educational developers and learning designers (Jandrić et al., 2020). The stories and successes of the pandemic unfortunately can get old quickly. They were dark times, and the journeys through and out of crisis represent a persuasive argument for snapping back to the powerful experiences of face-to-face (and the leveraging of the billions of dollars of infrastructure built to sustain those experiences) (Stephenson & Torn, 2023).

This highly interactive and provocative hypothetical-style panel discussion will imagine a future university without educational developers, educational technologists, and learning designers and without the technology they use to enhance the student experience and make teaching and learning more agile and connected. The panel and the audience will actively explore the implications of an entirely analogue education without the need for learning designers and then rebuild the ecosystems of staffing, skills and strategic integrations for a university that wants to be digital first. Aligned to the conference themes of *digital pedagogy* and *critical insights into the role of digital technologies in tertiary education*, the panel will collectively take the audience on a journey through the whiplash many of us have experienced and into the complexity of strategically designing and delivering online learning in a post-digital, post crisis new normal.. The aim of the panel is to collectively shift the dial on how we understand, articulate, and develop our benefit to the institution, how others have been extremely successful in doing that (and what can we learn from them) and how we are collectively struggling with precarious contracts, budgets, de-professionalisation and constantly shifting priorities.

Premise

It is December 2024. Our university has been through some of the most disruptive times for higher education in a generation. And through that disruption we saw glimmers of the bright future that digital has been promising since we first had consumer access to computers. The pivot to remote teaching was more than a reflex response enabled by technology-led mode shifting. The knowledge, expertise, and capacity to learn through experience saw the deployment of inventive, novel, creative and effective approaches to the rapid upskilling of staff and students, the design of online learning and the building of communities of engaged learners spread across the world (Abdullah et al., 2022; Vlachopoulos, 2022). But as we emerged from the harsh realities of lockdowns, border closures, fear, and the increasing risks of getting seriously ill from a virus we didn't understand something changed, and the trajectory towards the excellence in online practice that was within our grasp, it started to slip away (Jandrić et al., 2021; Jandrić et al., 2022). Now those working at the forefront of online and digital are faced with demands for physical teaching, for pen and paper exams (Cassidy, 2023). The voices of politicians, senior academics, and administrators are filled with reverie for an imperfect analogue past, railing against all that is digital (Wheeler & Griffiths, 2022). And even as we push back against all this rhetoric, digital "advancements" emerged to add fuel to the bonfire of online pedagogy; the wide scale availability of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, has given those who wish for more conservative teaching practices the perfect excuse to snap back.

Panel format

Through a series of provocations, audience interaction opportunities and challenging multimedia scenario-building interventions built around the deeply immersive world of a hypothetical university, the panel will interrogate the question; How do we find our equilibrium and continue to lead on innovation in teaching and learning ensuring that all our activity is deeply embedded in institutional strategy? The panel will build on the principles of immersion to trigger a sense of hyperreality for the both the audience and the panel members themselves, supporting them to collectively traverse the transitional, uncertain spaces of a post-crisis university (Baudrillard, 1994). Bringing together the diverse experiences and perspectives, we will co-design that equilibrium, developing an understanding of the landscape and strategies for this imagined, potentially real future. The audience will be engaged in the immersive scenario by acting as the University Senate, voting on the decisions taken by the panel, and challenging the premises and assumptions made in response to the multimedia interventions.

Panel members

The panel will be moderated by the three authors. The panel membership will be confirmed if the panel proposal is accepted, and after program confirmation of day and time but will include an edtech vendor, a student, a senior leader from the sector (PVC/DVC level) and an employer. The three authors are senior leaders in the higher education sector from Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

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