

Into the mainstream: where next for Critical Ed Tech Research?
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Looking back over the editorials for Learning, Media and Technology, it is possible to discern a common theme. The central plea is for those working in the fields of 'Ed Tech' to take a more critical approach to research, over the far more common instrumental endeavours (e.g. Eynon, 2018; Potter, 2017; Selwyn, 2012).

Yet, over recent years there has been an interesting shift. Critical Ed Tech research is becoming more mainstream.

The most appropriate way to evidence this would be through a sophisticated combination of bibliometric, web metric and discourse analysis – but instead I simply offer some recent instances I have experienced as co-editor.

Over the past few months I have been at three quite different conferences, where work from the journal has featured. At the American Educational Association (AERA) Conference this year it was possible to create a 'critical Ed Tech programme' from the variety of panels, workshops and other events on offer that were focused on this topic, with many contributions by both editors and authors in this journal. At the Networked Learning Conference, critical pedagogy and technology research was both practised and theorised. Similarly, at the London Festival of Learning, that encompassed the International Conference of the Learning Sciences (ICLS), Learning at Scale (L@S) and the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED), a number of keynote speakers spoke passionately about the need to connect the work in these fields with wider debates in the Sociology of Ed Tech, including topics such as algorithmic accountability, knowledge infrastructures, and agency. In all instances, authors and papers that feature in this journal were mentioned.

In June, the editorial team could not help but be pleased to find out that Learning, Media and Technology now ranks 13 out of 238 Education journals and has a 2017 impact factor of 3.175. While the problems with such metrics are well established, it can perhaps be taken as another indication of the interest and engagement with studies of education and technology that take a more critical stance. Certainly, the numbers of submissions to the journal or numbers of people reading it have never been higher.

It seems then like an exciting moment for this area of study: might it be the case that we are at last becoming more mainstream? It is perhaps too early to say, but if these trends are supported by evidence, then it is something to celebrate. Yet, there is a risk that much of this effort is isolated within our own communities, and whilst the number of experts engaged in this area grows, we should ask whether or not we are connecting sufficiently well with wider networks to

enable this area of focus to develop fully. In particular, we could be more mindful of connecting with the following:

- 1) Academics in related disciplines: There is a huge amount of work going on in other areas of social science and technology studies that are relevant to our area. Indeed, authors in Learning, Media and Technology often cite this work on a regular basis. But those working in related areas tend not to look to Education for inspiration, and do not cite our work from this journal. This is something that needs to change to develop and innovate in this area of study.
- 2) Developers of Ed Tech from an array of disciplines including computer science and engineering: It is of course important to maintain a theoretical stance, yet such links can sometimes enable the building of more innovative and potentially valuable social data science methods, and encourage stronger understanding of the technology that we are trying to theorise about. Both are crucial for the currency and future directions of our work.
- 3) New stakeholders in the Ed Tech space: there are increasing arrays of organisations working outside or on the edges of academia that have strong connections to policy. Often the people employed in these organisations have come from academia. Creative ways of connecting with the practices in these new and emerging networks may be important for the relevance and impact of our work more broadly.

Of course, the amount of instrumental work and hype that remains in this area outweighs our contribution in terms of sheer scale. But it is nevertheless time for some celebration and recognition of the fact that Critical Ed Tech Research has in some ways 'made it', even if there is more to do for it to become a fully-fledged field of study. Contributions that aim to work toward this goal are always welcome in Learning, Media and Technology.

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