

What do we mean by 'Education' and 'Technology'?

- Neil Selwyn My name is Neil Selwyn and I'm the author of *Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates*. This is a short recording following on from chapter one of the second edition, where we looked at a few basic definitions of what we mean by education, technology and educational technology.
- We finished the chapter with some questions about the digital nature of contemporary technologies, so to get us thinking about these issues, have a listen to the thoughts of another academic who researches and writes on the topic of education and technology.
- John Potter I'm John Potter, I'm reader in media in education at University College London Institute of Education.
- Neil Selwyn For this chapter I first asked John what he would highlight is the defining feature of the digital technologies the book is specifically concerned with.
- John Potter The defining features of the digital are that data moves very rapidly, it reduces reality to, kind of, reducible bite sized chunks that are easily transmissible and shareable, and that it's created this tremendous network, the internet, and people use it rapidly to send information here there. That's the actual kind of nuts and bolts of what the digital is.
- Neil Selwyn John points to many of the technical features that we discussed in the chapter. Clearly data is a key component of digital technology use, so we're less interested in the actual physical devices as the data that they're processing. As John also acknowledges, the speed, the reach, and the fundamentally networked nature of these data flows are key to understanding how digital technologies are having such an impact on our everyday lives.
- So the big question that then follows on from this is what this all means for education. How do we start making sense of the specific characteristics and specific qualities of digital education?
- John Potter I think in this we hit problems of culture, society, what we mean by education itself, because when something as fantastic and epoch changing as the digital hits something as culturally sensitive and nuanced as education itself, we have a whole series of issues that are thrown up, and so digital education means different things to different people. To those who manage education it essentially means reducing education to a series of data bits and information about people, and to those who are swimming in it, it means trying to negotiate the cultural experience of the digital with what they get when they come to a school or college.
- Neil Selwyn I like John's description of the culturally sensitive and nuanced nature of education. Education is not a simple set of variables that can be manipulated and altered. This perhaps clashes with the computational and data driven ways that digital technologies is often talked about. John's answer was also good in raising the point that different people see digital education from different perspectives. This leads us into the discussions that we'll have in chapter two of the book around the social shaped nature of digital technology and education. A government policy maker or a school administrator is going to talk about digital education in very different ways from a classroom teacher or student. These are people with very different interests, agendas and experiences. So as such digital education is always going to be a matter of discussion and disagreement rather than a straightforward matter of definition.