

Making Sense of Technology and Educational Change

- 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 2 of the second edition, where we looked at making sense of technology and educational change. We finished the chapter with some questions about developing a critical awareness of how technology relates to change in education. 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.
- Luci Pangrazio Hello, I'm Luci Pangrazio from Monash University. I'm a lecturer in digital literacies.
- Neil Selwyn For this chapter I first asked Luci a basic question: how could we go about understanding the relationships between technology and education?
- Luci Pangrazio A good starting point when thinking about how we might understand the relationship between technology and education is to perhaps think more broadly about what the word technology actually means. We tend to think of it as simply referring to the digital, but really technology is about the application of knowledge for practical purposes. So following that logic, we might see the pen and paper as a technology or even language itself. So if we're thinking about how we might understand this relationship between technology and education then we really need to start with the idea that the way the technology is used in a given situation should be determined by the educational goal, not just bolted on in order to engage or provide some sort of novelty. So in the best sense this relationship should be a dynamic one. Technology opens up new opportunities and perspectives, but the technology itself should be designed and chosen according to the practice or educational purpose.
- Neil Selwyn Luci provides a really useful framework for how we might want to make sense of the material that we've covered so far in the book. Her definition of technology as 'the application of knowledge for practical purposes' relates back to our discussions in chapter one about the need to see technology in terms of activities, practices and broader social contexts. As Luci implies, we're not simply fixating on digital devices and gadgets. Luci's answer also highlights the idea of educational interests and concerns shaping the nature of technology use. As she put it, educators should not be seeing technology simply as a bolt on, but instead something that they have some degree of control over. As Luci argued, technologies can be designed and chosen by educators, rather than simply being used. As a final thought then, I asked Luci to expand upon one of the key aims of chapter 2: what does she see as the key components to be aware of when developing a critical understanding of digital technology?
- Luci Pangrazio To my mind, key to developing a critical understanding of digital technologies is starting with the learner. Too often we find a neat tool or gadget and think about how we can use it rather than starting with the learner or the situation. It might sound counterintuitive but this really enables us to move beyond the technology to get at the real core concern or educational goal. We might find in fact that the technology needs to be reconsidered, redesigned to actually suit our purposes, rather than dictating to us what it is we will do with it.
- Neil Selwyn Again, Luci stresses the need to consider the social context of technology use. As she put it, you need to start from the perspective of the learner and their wider social context. So her answer implies that a robust critical understanding of technology is one that's built around social, cultural, political and, put simply, human concerns. This is all great advice to be taking forward into the next chapters of the book.