

## 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 5 of the second edition, where we looked at technology and teachers. We finished the chapter with questions about the specific nature of online teaching and what the future value of having teachers might be. 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.
- Michael Phillips Hi my name is Michael Phillips and I'm a lecturer at Monash University in Australia.
- Neil Selwyn For this chapter, I first asked Mike what he thought about the differences highlighted in the chapter about teaching online as opposed to teaching in face to face classrooms. What are some of the key issues relating to teaching online?
- Michael Phillips I think there are 3 main areas that all coalesce around the notion of engagement. Firstly the notion of engagement with content, so being able to pick particular emerging forms of technologies and considering ways in which content can be represented in different ways for students in different contexts. The second is allowing those students in their own unique individual settings to be able to engage with one another. And the third and final form of engagement is around academic enhancement, in particular about engaging students with feedback on academic tasks, being able to take advantage of different modalities to be able to communicate really effectively with students, I think will be a particular challenge for educators.
- Neil Selwyn Following on from his emphasis on engagement I then asked Mike why he thought we might still need teachers, in particular, what he calls expert teachers. What is the added value of having an expert teacher?
- Michael Phillips Expert teachers consider the needs of individual students in particular ways that can't be replicated by machines. I think that while learning analytics provide some unique insights, they are not going to be a substitute for individual understanding of people in particular situations.
- Neil Selwyn Mike's answers raise some interesting points. His first answer about the differences of teaching online as opposed to face to face teaching all relate to the broad issue of engagement. This is clearly a key element what it means to be a teacher. Mike starts by talking about engagement with online learning content and the need for teachers to make use of different technologies to present content to students in different ways. Now this relates to the idea of there being different modes of meaning making, what Mike later refers to as multi modal learning. Mike also raises the challenge of supporting students to engage with other students. Now you might think that online students happy to engage with their online peers, but supporting and arranging opportunities for student interaction is often the trickiest part of designing online learning. Mike then points to the issue of engaging students with feedback on their learning tasks. Now we know that learning is unlikely to happen without ongoing reflection and assessment of progress, and clearly this is a challenge when a teacher is not in the same place or the same time zone as their students. Now Mike's second answer about the unique ability for teachers to have specific knowledge of an individual learner and their individual learning needs is also interesting. Clearly an expert teacher should get to know their students and develop an empathetic connection with them, but Mike is hinting that this is a human quality that cannot be replicated by machines alone. Now on page 115 of the book we write that makers of

adaptive learning systems make the claim that digital data allows the system to know more about a student's learning than any real life teacher could ever hope to. Now Mike's answer clearly hints that this is not the case. So what do you think?