EdTech Futures

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 8 of the second edition, where we considered possible future directions and tensions surrounding technology and education. 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 Henderson   I'm Michael Henderson, Associate Professor at Monash University in the Faculty of Education in digital technologies.

Neil Selwyn   For the final chapter of the book, I asked Michael deceptively short question: what are the big future issues for education and technology? To be fair, and to keep things simple, I gave Michael the opportunity to focus on just one topic.

Michael Henderson   I think one of the issues that we need to deal with is how we can filter and usefully apply the massive data that's available to us as educators and also as learners, how we can fit ourselves within that data and shape our learning and work trajectories. So, for instance, how in schools we can usefully use and re-use this data that's already collected or that is around us, in order to be able to proactively shape what we do with students.

Neil Selwyn   It's interesting that out of every topic he could have talked about Michael chooses to focus on data. The importance of data in terms of digital technology has been noted regularly throughout the book. We didn't include a specific chapter on data, but for me the discussions that we will be having about technology and education in the near future will increasingly come back to matters of data, algorithms and the increasingly coded nature of education actions and education decisions. So Michael's answer hints at some important aspects relating to this topic. For example, he talks of the mass of data that now surrounds teachers and students. This is often talked about in terms of 'big data'. Big data can be seen as hype but the large amounts of digital data now in existence certainly do reflect a shift in scale and scope. Michael also points to the fact that a lot of this data is generated through our everyday uses of technology. Now often we're not aware of the data implications of our technology use. Michael also talks of educators having to work out ways of using and re-using this data to support learning. Now this points to the fact that digital data is not just used for one purpose. Instead any piece of data has a long life that continues well after it's been used for its initial intended purpose. So in education, this means that data is being re-circulated and re-used all the time. Now this raises a range of opportunities, but also concerns for everyone in education, so increasing people's levels of data awareness and data literacy will be key challenges over the next decade and beyond.