



8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8)

Outlook 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe

ARC8 Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World

Session 3 | Friday, 5 March 2021

Memo

Dr Wayne HOLMES, Consultant, Independent, United Kingdom



Wayne was asked to make a 10-minute presentation focusing on the following 3 questions to provide food for thought for the expert group:

1. What is your take, how inclusive are learning and teaching in the digital world? what is the status quo? Do you have any numbers to show?
2. What potential risks do you foresee that could jeopardize greater inclusion in learning and teaching in a digital world in the next 10 years?
3. What opportunities and leverage points do you see to promote inclusion in learning and teaching in a digital world the next 10 years?

Wayne began his presentation by discussing the **Status Quo** of higher education and digital learning in the UK. He began by delving into the history and principle of the Open University:

- The Open University (established in 1969)
 - Currently, 170,000 students (one of the largest in Europe).
 - Designed for students unable to attend campus universities (e.g. people who did not 'succeed' in school, people who are in worked, people who have disabilities, people who are careers).

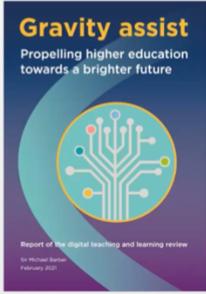
- 'Open' mean 'open to anyone whatever their qualifications.' The first online courses were launched in 1998 (pg) and 1999 (ug).
- OpenLearn (launched 2006) has ha 80 million visits.
- FutureLearn (launched in 2013) hosts courses from 100+ universities worldwide which have been taken by 'millions' of students.
- Other UK universities and online learning
 - Over the past decade, almost all other UK universities (-100) have launched online courses.
 - Currently, they are (according to UCAS):
 - >300 online undergraduate courses (from 42 institutions), and
 - >1,250 online postgraduate (from 130 institutions).
 - JISC (launched 1993)
 - The UK's higher, further education and skills sectors' not-for-profit organization for digital services and solutions.
 - JISC is an umbrella organization that supports universities with digital and online technologies, including, technologies, and equipment.

Wayne proceeded to discuss the Status Quo during COVID:

Higher Education and Digital Learning in the UK: The status quo: during COVID



- **Office for Students**
 - Before the pandemic 58% of students and 47% of teaching staff had no experience of digital teaching and learning.
 - By December 2020, 92% of students were learning either fully or mostly online.
- **Online learning mostly involved:**
 - PDFs;
 - Videos;
 - live and recorded online lectures; and
 - lecture slides.



The status quo during COVID also involved:

- Online placements;
- Digitally simulated scenarios;
- Science experiments conducted with -remote-co trolled lab equipment;
- Online master classes and performances for music students;
- Digitally exhibitions connecting portfolio students with industry experts and employers;
- Virtual writing workshops;
- AI-driven adaptive learning technologies;
- and others few and far between.

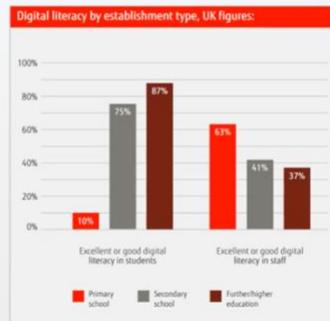
Wayne expressed that there were quite a number of innovative ways in which online electronic resources and technologies were being used, but these tend to be few and far between.

Wayne then proceeded to discuss the **Risks**:

Higher Education and Digital Learning in the UK: The risks



- **Costs**
 - £27,750 for an undergraduate degree;
 - ~£18,000 for an OU degree.
- **Access to technology**
 - 12% aged 11-18 years have no Internet access at home (www.ons.gov.uk).
- **Digital literacy**
 - The digital literacy of staff, not the students.
- **Poor pedagogy**
 - Instructionalism.
 - Prioritising content over learning.



Research report: UK. The road to digital learning. Intel and Fujitsu

Based on Wayne's observations, he presented two takeaways:

- First, the digital literacy of the group of students and the staff are observed. The story here could be, according Wayne, students are digitally literate but the academic staff and the universities are not.
- Second, Wayne focused on the percent of digitally literate higher education students which stood at 87 percent. Wayne presents the other end, exposing that 13 percent of higher education students were not digitally literate. More so, Wayne suggested looking at the rate of the digital literacy of primary and secondary students. As the university students of tomorrow, the situation can be seen as challenging.

Wayne reemphasized what he thought was the biggest risk: poor pedagogy, more so in online learning poor. The prevalence of instructionalism, where students rely on the instructor as the source of knowledge, was described by Wayne as an endemic across universities and the education landscape. There is a typical prioritization of content over learning, which Wayne considers to be a cost, a risk.

Wayne then proceeded to discuss **opportunities**:

Higher Education and Digital Learning in the UK: The opportunities



- **Artificial Intelligence** for:
 - learner assistance
 - curriculum design
 - augmenting teaching
 - supporting health and well-being
 - facilitating teacher-based assessment
- **Open Educational Resources (OER)**
 - Around the world, there are millions of OER. But therein lies their problem: how does a learner find the right OER to help their learning?
 - Projects like X5GON aim to help.



Wayne identified Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an opportunity to help design the curriculum to meet appropriate needs and contexts, to develop personalized curricula.

Additionally, Wayne identified a number of opportunities for AI contribute:

- AI can augment teaching and help teachers better teach;
- AI can be used to support health and well-being,
- AI can help teachers do better assessments

Ultimately, Wayne highlighted that, as much as AI can help in a myriad of ways, AI cannot teach, and cannot replace teaching and teachers.

In summary, costs are enormous, risks are enormous, but there are opportunities that should be discussed further.

After the presentation of Wayne, the members of the expert groups gave comments and asked questions:

Dr Keiko IKEDA, Division of International Affairs, Institute for Innovative Global Education, Kansai University, Japan

The question Keiko posed was with regard to the mindset of the faculty stakeholders in relation to the acceptance of contributions of AI in teaching. She asked how the mindset was in the UK as compared to others contexts.

Response of Wayne, in summary:

The first contributing reason why the uptake of AI by teachers is because developers presented AI as a tool that does the job better than the teacher. Thus, in it is understandable why teachers would be wary.

Wayne explicitly stated that this was not true. Based on his professional opinion, AI tools do not and cannot teach better than teachers in the foreseeable future. Hence the interest of Wayne in tools that can help teachers teach.

The education embedded in technology are primitive versions of pedagogy, limited to instructionalism. The tools whole purpose would be to stop the student from failing. However, failing teaches a student how to get back to their feet and can be a very good pedagogy.

Lastly, with regard to the notion of personalization in relation to AI. Wayne explained that these were tools personalized in the sense of making more efficient pathways for teaching and learning. However, the whole purpose of AI and these tools are to make everybody the same and, at the end of the day, pass the exam. This to Wayne is not personalization.

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