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ABSTRACT

The following publication contains book reviews of these titles:

- **Machado, A. de B., Sousa, M. J., Dal Mas, F., Secinaro, S. and Calandra, D.** (eds). 2024. *Digital transformation in higher education institutions.* Springer Nature.
- **García-Peñalvo, F. J., Sein-Echaluce, M. L., and Fidalgo-Blanco, Á.** (eds). 2024. *Innovation and technologies for the digital transformation of education: European and Latin American perspectives.* Lecture Notes in Educational Technology. Springer Nature.
- **Thomas, D. A. and Laterza, V.** (eds.). 2026. *Critical perspectives on EdTech in higher education: Varieties of platformisation.* Palgrave Macmillan.
- **Anders, B. A.** 2026. *Designing instruction with generative AI. 24/7 support for optimizing teaching and learning.* Routledge.

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REVIEW 1: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (A. DE B. MACHADO, M. J. SOUSA, F. DAL MAS, S. SECINARO, D. CALANDRA)

Review of Machado, A. de B., Sousa, M. J., Dal Mas, F., Secinaro, S., Calandra, D. (eds). 2024. Digital Transformation in Higher Education Institutions. Springer Nature. 223 pages, ISBN978-3-031-52295-6, ISBN978-3-031-52296-3 (eBook)

Review authored by: Wu Shang & Lei Cai

Ever-growing digital technology has reshaped the landscape of education. How can higher education institutions respond to the technology-driven changes? The edited volume *Digital Transformation in Higher Education Institutions* (Machado et al. 2024) has collected twelve insightful contributions that offer both theoretical reviews and practical case analyses.

Several chapters stand out for their relevance to educational technologists. In Chapter 2, Machado et al. conduct a scoping review to examine the applicability of artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies to higher education. The analysis of 13 selected publications identifies three thematic areas: the application of AI to expand teaching and learning approaches, the use of blockchains to implement data management and credential verification, and the combined use of both technologies to assist in "the creation of a sustainable, all-inclusive environmental system" (Machado et al. 2024: 32). This chapter may offer educational technologists implications for the innovative integration of digital technologies into administrative practices such as academic credential verification and fraud prevention, as well as instructional practices including adaptive learning platforms, intelligent tutoring systems and AI-driven feedback mechanisms in higher education institutions.

One of the key functions of blockchain—educational qualification verification—is illustrated through the experience of the University of Turin by Presutti and Natale in Chapter 11. The authors examined four Italian cases (Roma Tre University, DiploMe, Blockchain4EDU – BCDiploma and Bestr) of applying blockchain technology to credential verification before elaborating on the experience of the University of Turin, which selected the Bestr platform to issue blockcerts to 380 Master's graduates. This chapter may offer a replicable template for educational technologists with two implications. First, a bottom-up approach, initiated by technical staff, then involving teaching managers and leadership, demonstrating that digital transformation requires combined professional efforts beyond technical expertise. Second, a specific implementation process that prioritizes students' management of their blockcerts and protection of their privacy. Nevertheless, the justification for Turin's selection of Bestr would be clearer to readers if the authors had systematically compared the preceding four cases, rather than merely introducing them sequentially. A survey on the feedback of students and employers may also strengthen the authors' claims about blockchain's practical values.

Another key concern for educational technologists is the educational policies related to digital transformation. Baxto, in Chapter 4, critiques the inconsistency of Brazilian government policies in implementing digital transformation. This results in the Brazilian education system exhibiting only an incipient level of digital government maturity, with key goals of the National Education Plan remaining partially unachieved. Drawing on recommendations of the Federal Court of Auditors, the author supports the formulation of a coordinated and cross-federal digital education policy implemented as a long-term "state policy" rather than short-term "government policy". Although the study is confined to the Brazilian context, its implications for the importance of consistent and sustained policy support may be transferable to countries with decentralized education systems that face similar coordination challenges in implementing large-scale digital education reforms.

This volume also explores how to integrate digital technology into course development, learning experience and pedagogical practices, offering insightful guidance for instructional designers and educators. In Chapter 3, Marques, Mateus and Araújo examine a case at the Polytechnic University of Tomar where 24 curricular units were transformed into MOOCs through an Agile-based process with five iterative phases (analysis, design, development, implementation, assessment). This may offer instructional designers and educators a potentially transferable model for digital course design. The multidisciplinary workshops conducted across the process highlight the value of collaborative expertise over isolated work. The pilot testing before

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final launch, collection of students' feedback and analysis of satisfaction at the phases of implementation and assessment demonstrate a student-centered design philosophy, meriting the attention of instructional designers and educators in teacher-centered educational contexts, where MOOC content may be designed without adequate consideration for the students' response. However, the study leaves space for future exploration due to its three limitations: incomplete implementation, lack of learning outcome data validating effectiveness, and inadequate explanation of the low to moderate teacher attendance during the process.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the instructional strategy of gamification. In Chapter 5, Pulist and Sharma conduct a wide-ranging review of gamification, with particular emphasis on its application to open and distance learning. The authors recommend the judicious implementation of gamification-based instructional design, arguing that its effectiveness is highly contextualized. This argument is also supported by Tripathi in Chapter 6 who explores the potential of gamification in a case study of UTAS Salalah, Oman. The author conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 UTAS academics across four departments based on the AIDA model (awareness, interest, desire, action). The findings reveal that the instructors recognize the benefits of gamification in enhancing students' engagement and motivation, especially in practical courses rather than theoretical ones, while also identifying challenges such as insufficient awareness and technological limitations. The most striking disagreement among instructors concerns gamified assessment effects. These findings carry clear implications for launching gamification awareness campaigns and providing professional training. Although both chapters analyze benefits and challenges, neither offers an actionable, step-by-step pedagogical template for instructional designers or educators seeking to apply gamification to their courses effectively. Methodologically, Chapter 6 relies exclusively on semi-structured interviews examining the instructors' perspectives rather than mixed approaches that could provide triangulation from student feedback or learning outcome analytics.

Among the ChatGPT-related contributions, Chapters 7 and 8 offer empirical and case-based insights into the application of ChatGPT, which are of particular relevance to educators. A questionnaire, comprising both open- and close-ended questions, was constructed by Costa, Costa, and Carvalho (Chapter 7) to examine the perceptions of 389 Portuguese graduate students with regard to their use of ChatGPT. Although the majority of students surveyed report familiarity and a positive experience with ChatGPT, they still demonstrate concerns regarding information accuracy, answer reliability and ChatGPT's replacement of human interaction. These concerns are echoed in Chapter 8 where Biancone and Chmet conduct a single-interventionist qualitative case study on using ChatGPT in the accounting domain. Despite ChatGPT's powerful capacities in enhancing process automation, the authors identify challenges, including data lag, limited access to information and a lack of specific guidance. These findings, based on a culture-specific context (Portuguese graduate students) and a domain-specific context (accounting), may not be readily generalizable. Nevertheless, both studies may still offer several implications for educators: first, foster students' ability to critically evaluate ChatGPT-generated answers; second, reinforce the importance of professional expertise and human oversight; third, underscore the irreplaceable role of human interaction in AI-integrated education.

In Chapter 10, Bresolin and de Sá Freire propose the Neolearning methodology, drawing on experiential and expansive learning theories. A five-module Neolearning cycle (retrieve, reflect, discover, test, apply) was designed and implemented in three cases situated in different contexts: an innovation ecosystem project, undergraduate courses and an online course for municipal agents. Five mechanisms were incorporated in the planning and execution: stakeholder recognition, collaboration, experience sharing, integrating knowledge with network stakeholders and co-production of the common good. By combining both theoretical foundations and practical applications, this chapter offers instructional designers and educators an actionable framework for creating dynamic learning environments where students can apply knowledge to real-world practice. Unlike studies confined to a single case, this chapter validates the feasibility of this methodology through three distinct contextualized cases. Despite the authors' claim of measuring student and teacher satisfaction, the chapter only provides a narrative summary of students' positive comments and scores from the first case, without a clear explanation of the assessment instruments or procedures. Moreover, it lacks examination of the varying degrees of students' feedback, which weakens the credibility of the authors' claim regarding the effectiveness of the methodology.

The most notable value of this edited volume is its wider coverage of cases across different continents, Europe, South America and Asia, and inclusion of underrepresented countries such as Oman. Compared with edited collections confined to a single region, this broader geographical distribution aligns with the global context of accelerating digital transformation in higher education institutions. It enables conditional transferability of insights to countries and regions with similar sociolinguistic characteristics. However, the volume also has several limitations. Structurally, it would be clearer for the readers to navigate if the editors had classified the 12 contributions into different parts. Methodologically, most chapters rely on descriptive or exploratory designs with limited use of mixed methods and triangulation, which may weaken the robustness of their findings. In addition, many of the proposed frameworks and models remain at the conceptual stage, with limited empirical validation of their effectiveness, which may reduce readers' confidence in their applicability. Therefore, readers are encouraged to engage critically with the frameworks and to adapt them creatively to their own educational contexts.

Despite these limitations, *Digital Transformation in Higher Education Institutions* makes a valuable and timely contribution to higher education reform. Its combination of theoretical discussions and applied case studies across various domains, including course design, policy formulation, instructional strategies, learning methodologies, AI application and innovation in assessment, makes it a comprehensive resource. It is particularly valuable for educational technologists seeking to promote infrastructure and policy development; and for instructional designers and educators seeking to create more dynamic learning environments.

REVIEW 2: INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION: EUROPEAN AND LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES (F. J. GARCÍA-PEÑALVO, M. L. SEIN-ECHALUCE, Á. FIDALGO-BLANCO)

Review of García-Peñalvo, F. J., Sein-Echaluce, M. L., Fidalgo-Blanco, Á. (eds). 2024. Innovation and Technologies for the Digital Transformation of Education: European and Latin American Perspectives. Lecture Notes in Educational Technology. Springer Nature. 395 pages. ISBN978-981-97-2467-3, ISBN978-981-97-2468-0 (eBook)

Review authored by: Panagiota Tzanni

This book is a collection of 38 case studies of the use of learning technologies in education within European and Latin American contexts. It was published in 2024, in the post-generative AI world, and therefore constitutes a timely snapshot of higher education specialists' initial adoption of, and experimentation with, generative AI. The editors are based at the University of Salamanca, the University of Zaragoza and the Technical University of Madrid and are linked to the CINAIC conference community; the book therefore has a strong Spanish higher education flavour, although several contributions come from Colombia, Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. The book explores numerous examples of educational technology adoption from both practical and theoretical perspectives. However, the reviewer believes it will be most useful to higher education specialists in the STEM fields, as most of the case studies originate in engineering, computer science, biology, and related disciplines.

The 38 chapters are not thematically grouped, and each one approaches a different topic, field and level of education. Some focus on the early adoption of generative AI in fields such as engineering or computer science education, whereas others turn to early childhood and primary education and the cultivation of computational thinking in young children. As it is not possible to analyse all 38 chapters individually within the space of this review, it will instead explore the collection thematically, acknowledging that the selection of themes necessarily reflects this reviewer's interests and expertise. Three themes emerged from my reading of the book and provide the structure for the remainder of this review: first, generative AI in higher education, with its early evidence and need for critical caution; second, active, personalised and playful pedagogies enabled by technology; and third, equity, inclusion and the social mission of digital transformation.

Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 23 focus on the early adoption of generative AI in higher education. Most are empirical snapshots of real student use of large language models (LLMs) such as

ChatGPT. Chapters 1 and 2, for example, explore the benefits and drawbacks of using ChatGPT in higher education, taking a broadly positive stance towards its usage. In Chapter 1, the authors found that students use generative AI mostly for clarification, generating source code, brainstorming ideas for projects and assistance with academic writing. Chapter 2 offers an early comparative study of ChatGPT and Claude, investigating how accurate and relevant their outputs are in helping students plan and define the scope of their bachelor's thesis. The findings suggest that both LLMs can be useful, as each presents certain strengths and weaknesses and the two tend to complement each other. The authors also acknowledge the limitations of their research, the most notable being that AI is evolving so rapidly that their findings could soon appear outdated. Chapter 4 is a more generic chapter in which the author describes the potential impact of generative AI on education. Beyond a general discussion providing basic definitions, the chapter delves into the opportunities and challenges arising from the advent of this new technology: on the one hand, generative AI's ability to provide personalised learning; on the other, challenges such as privacy concerns, equity and access, and the preservation of the human touch. Chapter 5 analyses how flipped learning activities can alleviate some of the drawbacks brought by ChatGPT, such as overreliance or the risk of plagiarism, drawing on an engineering course in which flipped learning activities were designed. The chapter focuses only on ChatGPT and on characteristics of the application as it was two years ago; since then, the application has progressed considerably, and some of the information may already be outdated. Chapter 8 considers AI as a useful tool for researchers, whereas Chapter 23 examines the use of AI in product design and its current limitations: the generative AI tools available in 2023 and early 2024 were not capable of contributing substantially to product design work. Indeed, all the chapters in this theme rely on tools available in 2023, and the findings of this research risk obsolescence, as several of the authors themselves admit. Educational technologists reading these case studies may therefore not find many insights into the current state of the art; educators, especially those in STEM fields, will benefit most if they focus on the pedagogy behind the use of these applications rather than on the technology itself.

The second theme concerns active, personalised and playful pedagogies enabled by technology, and Chapters 3, 6, 7, 13, 16, 22, 24 and 26 can be considered as belonging to it. In Chapter 3, low motivation and poor performance led a group of lecturers to reorganise their course and combine students from two different fields, AI and Network Engineering, in order to boost the performance of the latter. By implementing a 'learning by doing' model and employing collaborative work, student performance improved significantly. Chapter 6 discusses the design of pre-lab H5P interactive videos to assist engineering students in their laboratory sessions, with positive results, as students reported that they benefited from the activity. Chapter 7 describes an engineering course with a high dropout rate in which tutors designed personalised learning paths for the modules that students found most challenging. An open-access authoring tool enabled the educators to create personalised activities targeting students' specific weaknesses, improving satisfaction and performance and lowering dropout rates. Chapter 13 examines serious games in higher education, specifically for learning data mining techniques: through a 3D interface, students access a highly interactive video game that teaches them to handle SQL databases. Students reported an enhanced learning experience, and tutors reported a reduced workload thanks to automated feedback. Chapter 16 presents a methodology framework for Android programming courses in higher education engineering, the product of ten years of refinement, which combines on-site classes in a computer room, individual self-assessment and programming exercises, a team programming project and oral presentations of teamwork. The remaining chapters in this theme focus on teaching methodologies that can foster digital transformation, such as using Moodle for transparent groupwork assessment (Chapter 24), applying learning analytics in a flipped classroom (Chapter 26), or engaging students as partners in learning experience design (Chapter 22). Across these chapters, it is evident that the technology serves the pedagogy and not the opposite; it acts as a vehicle for a better student experience and improved performance. These chapters will be most useful to instructional designers, because they show how different technologies can be applied across subjects and fields.

The third theme is where the 'Latin American perspectives' of the title come most clearly into view, together with the book's concern for the social mission of digital transformation; Chapters 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 25, 33 and 35 can be considered as belonging to this theme. Chapter 15 is set

in rural Colombia, where the main challenge is the digital divide. The educators in this case study pursued digital transformation by first identifying students' needs and then employing project-based learning. Despite the low-technology environment, they created a space in which students improved their computational skills, a reminder that digital transformation is not only a matter of acquiring the newest tools. Chapter 12 explores the application of socially assistive robots to support the social and emotional development of children with autism spectrum disorder, reporting positive effects, as the children often preferred interacting with the robots because of the lower interactional demands placed on them. In a similar spirit of inclusion, Chapter 17 describes a service-learning initiative designed to promote STEM studies, and civil engineering in particular, among secondary school girls in Madrid. Its findings are counterintuitive and, to this reviewer, among the most valuable in the book: the presentations of final-year engineering projects that were intended to inspire the girls instead further intimidated them, reinforcing their perception that civil engineering is too complex. This honest reporting of a negative result is rare and instructive for anyone designing outreach interventions. Chapters 11 and 18 position service-learning as a way for higher education to remain socially relevant in the age of AI, with Chapter 18 documenting a successful initiative in Madrid that combined STEAM, artistic and intercultural mediation, citizen participation and participatory mapping. Chapter 25 turns to student data privacy: the SPADATAS project curated open educational resources (146 selected from the 178 examined) to promote responsible data management in schools, a resource bank that educational technologists may find immediately usable. Finally, Chapters 33 and 35 bring Mexican perspectives, from cooperative learning with emerging digital media in telesecundaria schools to a post-pandemic comparison of in-person and remote university learning, in which students favoured in-person conditions while pointing towards a carefully implemented hybrid model. Taken together, these chapters demonstrate that digital transformation is inseparable from questions of equity, access and community.

In conclusion, this collection offers a broad and timely panorama of educational innovation across European and Latin American contexts, spanning levels of education from pre-school to postgraduate study. Its strengths lie in its timeliness and in the practical nature of its exemplars, many of which readers will be able to transfer to their own disciplines and institutions. Its limitations should also be acknowledged: the depth of the chapters is uneven, the collection leans heavily towards engineering and STEM education in Spanish universities, and a handful of chapters (such as Chapters 19 to 21) have little direct focus on technology. Moreover, as discussed above, the chapters on generative AI are tied to the tools of 2023 and will age quickly. This book is therefore most useful for those within higher education who want to see how educators in these specific contexts approached digital transformation in practice, with its opportunities, challenges and applications, rather than for those seeking the latest technologies. Read in this way, by educational technologists, instructional designers and educators alike, the collection delivers what its title promises: a grounded and plural account of the digital transformation of education as it is actually being enacted in European and Latin American classrooms.

REVIEW 3: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDTECH IN HIGHER EDUCATION: VARIETIES OF PLATFORMISATION (D. A. THOMAS, V. LATERZA)

Review of Thomas, D. A., Laterza, V. (eds.). 2026. Critical Perspectives on EdTech in Higher Education: Varieties of Platformisation. Palgrave Macmillan. 264 pages. ISBN 978-3-031-88172-5.

Review authored by: Kristen Karmazinuk

Educational technology (EdTech) in higher education is often framed as neutral, as if platforms are simply tools that support teaching rather than shape it. "Critical Perspectives on EdTech in Higher Education: Varieties of Platformisation" (Thomas and Laterza 2026) challenges that assumption directly.

This volume positions itself within the emerging field of Critical EdTech studies, as the authors term it, arguing that platforms are not passive infrastructures but active forces that reorganize higher education at multiple levels, including pedagogical, institutional, economic, and political.

As Laterza, Thomas, and de Andrade explain in the opening chapter, platformisation is not merely about tools, but about "the penetration of infrastructures, economic processes and governmental frameworks of digital platforms" into education itself (Laterza, Thomas and de Andrade 2026: 2), meaning this is not just about adopting new tools, but about platforms reshaping how education is structured, governed and delivered.

What makes this book especially valuable for educational technologists, instructional designers, and higher education practitioners is that it goes beyond mere critique. Instead, it surfaces the underlying logics shaping digital learning environments that many practitioners are already working within, often without fully recognizing it. In this sense, the volume invites a reframing of how EdTech is understood and engaged with in practice.

Across the volume, several themes emerge that reinforce this argument. A first key contribution is how the book reframes technology from a set of tools to a form of infrastructure. This reframing changes how agency, design, and control are understood within higher education. Platforms are presented less as passive systems and more as environments that structure interaction. Drawing on Decuypere et al. (2021), the authors emphasize that platforms function as intermediaries where "the rules for what happens in the platform spaces, are set by platforms themselves rather than users" (2021: 5). This becomes more evident in discussions of learning management systems, where pedagogical choices are often shaped by the system's architecture rather than its instructional intent. As further explored in Chapter 7, this often reinforces traditional teaching models, where platforms replicate rather than rethink existing practices, prioritizing content delivery and measurable outputs over more interactive, collaborative learning.

A second key theme is the datafication of learning. Learning is increasingly captured, measured, and turned into data that can be analyzed and acted on. The volume shows that this is not a value-free process. What gets measured starts to define what learning is, and what is valued within it. As discussed in the introduction, this contributes to what Williamson (2017) describes as the "enumeration of the university," where educational value becomes tied to what can be counted and tracked (2017: 5). Over time, these metrics do not just describe learning; they begin to shape how it is designed, delivered, and evaluated.

This introduces an important tension that runs through multiple chapters. As more aspects of learning become measurable, there is a risk that what cannot be easily captured becomes less visible in both design and decision-making. As explored in Chapter 2, which foregrounds the ethical implications of these systems, this tension is not only technical but ethical, as platform-based solutions such as video monitoring introduce contradictions between institutional control and student trust, reshaping the learning environment into one that can feel surveyed rather than supported. This is especially relevant for instructional designers, who are often required to align learning experiences with measurable outcomes while maintaining depth and complexity. The volume does not reject data-driven approaches, but it encourages a more critical look at what is being prioritized and what may be overlooked.

A third contribution of the book lies in its attention to the political economy of EdTech. Rather than treating platforms as isolated tools, the chapters situate them within broader platform-based economic systems, where data, scale, and market positioning play central roles. Building on Komljenovic's (2021) work, the volume highlights how platforms extract value through data, generating what are described as "data rents" (2021: 6), referring to the value derived from the continuous collection and monetization of user data, while expanding their reach across institutional functions. This is significant because it shifts the role of higher education institutions from users of technology to participants in value-generating ecosystems they do not fully control. While institutions may adopt platforms to enhance learning or efficiency, they simultaneously contribute to data infrastructure that extends beyond their governance. Over time, this raises questions not only about ownership of data, but about who will ultimately benefit from its accumulation and how this reshapes institutional priorities. In this framing, platforms are reshaping the economic foundations of higher education.

This dynamic is further illustrated in Chapter 3, where Thomas and Nedeva examine platform dependence in the context of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and online degrees, showing how the architectural features and commercial logics of external platforms often constrain instructor autonomy. Faculty rarely operate independently, but are embedded within

institutional priorities, technical infrastructures, and vendor-driven systems. This creates an asymmetry of power, where instructors design within pre-defined environments rather than exercising full pedagogical control.

From a governance perspective, Chapter 4 highlights how platform decisions are shaped by policy, compliance, and market forces, often favouring large commercial providers and limiting institutional flexibility. Regulatory frameworks such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) introduce significant administrative and operational constraints, creating tension between pedagogical innovation and data protection requirements. These chapters show that platform decisions are not just instructional, but legal, contractual, and economic.

Closely connected to this is the tension between competing institutional logics. This volume highlights the coexistence of what Ivancheva et al. (2020) describe as the "logic of social relevance" and the "logic of capital," where efforts to expand access and flexibility come into tension with profit-driven partnerships and branding strategies (2020: 7). This tension is embedded in decisions about online programs, platforms, partnerships, and digital expansion, where institutional priorities are increasingly entangled with commercial interests.

A fourth recurring theme is the unbundling of education. Platformisation enables the separation of design, delivery, and assessment into discrete components, shifting away from integrated academic roles toward more distributed forms of work in which responsibilities are shaped by platform structures rather than professional autonomy. As Chapter 5 suggests, rather than producing a "flat" environment, digitally mediated academic work becomes, in Buergi's words, more "plat" than "flat" (Buergi 2026: 105), pointing to how platforms create uneven hierarchical conditions rather than equal or neutral learning environments. While this can create efficiencies, it also raises questions about coherence and ownership. At the level of lived academic experience, Chapter 5 also shows that platform-defined features and evaluation systems introduce new forms of control, surveillance, and performative accountability, reshaping how academic work is experienced. At the platform architecture level, Chapter 6 extends this by showing how teaching is broken into discrete, trackable activities, increasing administrative and technical demands while embedding instructors more deeply into platform-driven workflows.

The volume's empirical breadth further strengthens its contribution. Drawing on case studies from different national contexts, the book illustrates that platformisation does not unfold in the same way everywhere. This offers an important counterpoint to dominant narratives that position technology as universally transformative. Importantly, this breadth goes beyond teaching and learning contexts. Chapter 9 highlights the often-overlooked material and environmental dimensions of digital infrastructure, showing how higher education is embedded within what the authors describe as "extended carbon relations of higher education institutions" (Taylor and Vai 2026: 224), meaning the environmental impact of digital learning does not sit within the university itself, but is distributed across the wider systems, infrastructures and external providers it depends on. Chapter 10 further highlights how platformisation is expanding into administrative areas such as human resource management, embedding market-driven logics deeper into the core functions of the university.

This is especially important in contexts where design decisions are often framed as technical or operational rather than structural. By making these constraints visible, the volume enables practitioners to move toward more intentional forms of design and decision-making. It shifts the conversation from "how do we use this platform?" to "what is this platform enabling or limiting?"

For educational technologists and instructional designers, the relevance of this book is immediate, as it provides a language for understanding constraints that are often experienced in practice but not always articulated. Designing with a learning management system, aligning with analytics-driven metrics, or adapting to institutional technology decisions are not isolated tasks; they are engagements with systems that shape what is possible. The volume encourages a shift from simply working within these systems to critically examining them.

At the same time, the book's strength lies in its analysis rather than in offering prescriptive solutions. Readers who look for concrete frameworks may find this challenging, but this reflects the book's purpose. It does not simplify complexity; instead, it creates space for reflection

and critical engagement. As noted in the editors' discussion, emerging developments such as generative AI will require further analysis as their implications continue to evolve (Laterza, Thomas and de Andrade 2026: 17).

Overall, "Critical Perspectives on EdTech in Higher Education" offers a timely and necessary contribution to debates on digital transformation in higher education. By shifting attention from what technology enables to how it reshapes educational systems, the volume offers a nuanced, well-supported analysis. Importantly, it also points toward alternative possibilities, showing that platform design is not fixed but shaped by the values and decisions embedded within it. For those involved in designing, implementing, or managing digital learning environments, it offers both a clearer understanding of platform dynamics and a way to rethink their own practice. This makes the volume especially relevant at a time when institutions are integrating new forms of digital infrastructure, often without fully examining their long-term impacts. The book provides a foundation for asking more critical questions about these developments. Ultimately, the volume shows that platformisation is not simply a technological shift, but a structural and systemic transformation of the conditions under which education is designed, delivered, and experienced.

REVIEW 4: DESIGNING INSTRUCTION WITH GENERATIVE AI. 24/7 SUPPORT FOR OPTIMIZING TEACHING AND LEARNING (B. A. ANDERS)

Review of Anders, B. A. 2026. Designing Instruction with Generative AI. 24/7 Support for Optimizing Teaching and Learning. Routledge. 180 pages, ISBN9781032939254 (paperback)

Review authored by: A. Mappewali & Fikriani A. Omolu

Brent A. Anders' *Designing Instruction with Generative AI: 24/7 Support for Optimizing Teaching and Learning* (Anders 2026) is a timely and practical contribution to current discussions about artificial intelligence in education. Published by Routledge, the book responds to a real institutional problem: many educators are expected to design effective, accessible, motivating, and well-aligned courses, yet not all institutions have enough instructional designers to support every teacher. Anders does not present generative AI as a replacement for professional instructional designers. Instead, he positions it as a supportive tool that can help teachers plan, revise, and improve instruction when expert design support is limited.

The book is clearly organized. It begins with an introduction to artificial intelligence and generative AI, then moves to AI literacy, instructional design, course alignment, student learning outcomes, assessment, instructional strategies, motivation, instructional presence, accessibility, behavioral issues, and future possibilities. This structure is one of the book's main strengths. Rather than treating generative AI as a fashionable technological shortcut, Anders places it within established instructional design traditions, including ADDIE, backward design, Bloom's revised taxonomy, Kolb's experiential learning cycle, Keller's ARCS model of motivation, and the Community of Inquiry framework. This makes the book more than a collection of prompts. It is a guide to using AI through pedagogical reasoning. This is arguably the book's central contribution. Anders generally begins with educational purposes, learning outcomes, assessment evidence, learner needs, or instructional challenges, and then considers how AI might assist the instructor. His discussion of course alignment, for example, uses AI to review relationships among learning outcomes, assessments, and instructional activities while leaving the teacher responsible for judging the result. This example illustrates how the book embeds AI use within established processes of pedagogical evaluation.

One of the strongest parts of the book is its discussion of AI literacy. Anders organizes AI literacy into four components: awareness, capability, knowledge, and critical thinking. This framework is consistent with Long and Magerko's (2020) definition of AI literacy as a set of competencies that enables individuals to evaluate, communicate with, collaborate with, and use AI technologies effectively. Anders' treatment is accessible, but it does not become shallow. He reminds readers that AI literacy includes not only the ability to write prompts, but also the ability to understand hallucination, bias, data privacy, ethical use, deepfakes, environmental impacts, and overreliance. This is important because many educational discussions about AI still fall into one of two weak positions: fear of cheating or blind enthusiasm for productivity.

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Anders avoids both extremes. For language teachers, the framework is useful because AI literacy can also involve evaluating linguistic accuracy, register, cultural assumptions, and the appropriateness of generated output. This broadens AI literacy beyond prompt-writing toward critical evaluation of language and meaning.

The book's practical contribution lies in its applied orientation. Each major instructional topic is connected to concrete AI-supported activities. The chapters on learning outcomes, assessment, rubrics, instructional strategies, and accessibility are especially useful for teachers who want to redesign their teaching rather than simply add AI to existing routines. This is consistent with Kasneci et al.'s (2023) argument that large language models offer meaningful educational opportunities, but also introduce challenges that require careful teacher judgment. Anders' book helps educators translate that general principle into practical course design decisions. The assessment chapter illustrates this balance particularly well. Anders discusses the potential advantages of AI-assisted grading, including efficiency, consistency, rapid feedback, and scalability, but he also addresses algorithmic bias, limited interpretation of nuanced student work, overreliance, privacy, and ethical concerns. These issues are relevant to language assessment, where performance involves more than surface accuracy. AI-generated feedback may be useful, but teachers still need to decide whether it is appropriate to learners' proficiency, the task purpose, and the intended learning outcome.

The book also responds to a gap identified in earlier research. Much AI-in-education research has been technologically driven, with limited attention given to educators and pedagogical perspectives (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Anders' book addresses this problem directly. Its intended reader is not the AI engineer, but the teacher, trainer, or faculty member who needs practical support in designing better learning experiences. This educator-centered perspective makes the book particularly relevant for universities, schools, and training institutions where instructional design support is limited. It also makes the book useful for ELT practitioners who have access to generative AI but limited guidance on pedagogically sound integration. For example, Anders' AI-supported interviewing activities can be adapted for language learners to rehearse questioning, active listening, follow-up moves, and professional interaction before a face-to-face task. Similar principles could support role-play, oral-presentation rehearsal, writing feedback, or communicative assessment. Their value, however, depends on alignment with language-learning outcomes rather than on the novelty of interacting with AI.

Another strength is the book's attention to motivation, instructional presence, and accessibility. Many books on AI in education focus mainly on content generation, but Anders gives serious attention to the human dimensions of teaching and learning. His use of the ARCS model highlights attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction as important design concerns. His discussion of instructional presence through the Community of Inquiry framework reminds readers that learning depends not only on materials, but also on facilitation, scaffolding, dialogue, and social connection. The book also highlights that AI-generated outputs require critical evaluation and contextual judgement from educators, emphasising the continued importance of human oversight in AI-supported learning environments.

However, the book has some limitations. Although Anders addresses academic integrity, privacy, data security, and ethical use, the book is stronger as a practical instructional design guide than as an institutional governance framework. Its platform-specific sections may also date quickly because they discuss named AI providers, access models, and current capabilities in a fast-changing technological environment. This does not weaken the book's central argument, but it does mean that some practical details may require updating as AI tools, pricing models, institutional policies, and technical capabilities change.

A second limitation is that the book would be stronger with more extended empirical case studies. Anders provides many practical examples and AI activities, but readers would benefit from richer accounts of how instructors in different disciplines have used generative AI to redesign courses, improve assessment, support accessibility, or increase student engagement. Such examples could include implementation challenges, failed attempts, student responses, and measurable learning outcomes. Without these, the book remains useful as a professional guide, but less persuasive as an evidence-heavy academic monograph. For ELT readers, evidence showing how AI-supported activities influence language development, feedback uptake, participation, or learner independence would make the practical recommendations easier to evaluate.

The book could also develop its discussion of student perspectives more fully. Chan and Hu's (2023) study shows that students often recognize both the benefits and risks of generative AI, including support for personalized learning, writing, brainstorming, and research, alongside concerns about accuracy, privacy, ethics, and longer-term learning. Anders addresses several of these issues, but the book remains primarily concerned with instructors' use of AI for instructional design. Greater attention to agency, resistance, and interpretations of AI supported learning would have provided a more balanced account, particularly in language education, where learners may use AI as a tutor, translator, editor, conversation partner, or shortcut in ways that extend beyond formally designed learning activities.

Despite these limitations, *Designing Instruction with Generative AI* succeeds as a clear, practical, and pedagogically grounded guide for educators. Its main contribution is not simply introducing generative AI, but situating AI use within established instructional design principles. Beyond its relevance to ELT, this approach also has implications for instructional designers, educational technologists, and higher education practicioners. For instructional designers, the book demonstrates how Gen-AI can be incorporated into established processes of course alignment, assessment design, accessibility planning, and the development of instructional strategies. For educational technologists, its examples provide a basis for considering AI tools in relation to pedagogical purpose, technological affordances, accessibility, privacy, and implementation constraints. Higher education practitioners may similarly draw on its discussions of AI literacy, assessment, academic integrity, and instructional presence when developing staff support and institutional approaches to AI-supported teaching.

Overall, the book's main contribution lies in bringing generative AI into conversation with established instructional design principles and translating those principles into concrete course-design activities. Its practical orientation makes it particularly relevant to teaching faculty, trainers, novice instructional designers, academic developers, and educational technologies practicioners, while readers seeking sustained theoretical analysis or extensive empirical evidence may require more specialised sources. The platform-specific material may also date relatively quickly, and the limited treatment of empirical case studies, students' perspectives, and institutional governance constrains the scope of its contribution. Nevertheless, it provides an account of how generative AI can be considered across course alignment, assessment, instructional strategies, motivation, accessibility, and instructional presence.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USE

Generative AI tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript for language refinement. Specifically, ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Grammarly (web application) were used to improve grammar, clarity, and readability, without generating the substantive academic content, analysis, arguments, or conclusions of the manuscript.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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