JOURNAL OF INTERACTIVE MEDIA IN EDUCATION

Weller, M. 2020. History of Educational Technology – Editorial. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education,* 2020(1): 17, pp. 1–2. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/jime.601

EDITORIAL

History of Educational Technology – Editorial

Martin Weller

This collection brings together four articles which examine both broad approaches to the history of educational technology and more specific analysis of particular technologies. The broader reviews investigate different research patterns and the different challenges and contexts that such research has responded to. The specific analyses examine the development of eportfolios and VLEs. The history of educational technology is under-documented and this collection seeks to add to the literature in this field.

In February 2020, I published a book "25 Years of Ed Tech". In the introduction, I suggested that there were few books in the area of educational technology. I argued that such accounts were important not just because the history is in itself interesting (although that is true), but that they were necessary to counter the historical amnesia that affects much of educational technology, where every announcement of a new technology proclaims it is the first and a major disruption in the sector.

The writing of that book was one counter to this trend, and this collection of articles is another, so I am pleased to see it come to fruition. Hopefully it will mark an increased interest and recognition in the subject of educational technology history.

This collection brings together four articles which examine both broad approaches to the history of educational technology and more specific analysis of particular technologies. The first of the broader reviews from Bozkurt investigates different research patterns through a systematic review of the research literature. The second of the broad approaches from Scanlon explores the history of educational technology by considering what has influenced research and what are current trends and examining what influence these trends have had on the development of distance learning pedagogy. The first of the more specific analyses from Farrell, traces the evolution of the concept of portfolio from the renaissance to the present day, and focuses in particular on eportfolio implementation. The second specific technology paper from Farrelly, Costello and Donlon looks at perhaps the most dominant educational technology, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE or LMS). They take the approach of analysing the different metaphors used to talk about the VLE and combine these into six themes.

The history of educational technology is under-documented and this collection seeks to add to the literature in this field. The different approaches and topics taken by the authors highlights that it is a rich field to explore from a research perspective. It is also a timely and useful topic to consider at a time when many higher education institutions are relying on educational technology more heavily to deliver their main teaching. Understanding the history of these technologies can aid their effective implementation in the current situation.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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How to cite this article: Weller, M. 2020. History of Educational Technology – Editorial. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education,* 2020(1): 17, pp. 1–2. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/jime.601

Submitted: 01 September 2020 **Accepted:** 01 September 2020 **Published:** 17 September 2020

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